

Tuesday, January 31, 2023 • Read Psalm 78:32–48

Questions from the Scripture text: Despite all of the wonders, blessings, and warnings, how did Israel continue to respond (v32a)? In what most fundamental way (v32b)? With what two things did the Lord respond by filling their lives (v33)? How did they seem (cf. v36a) to respond to His slaying them (v34)? What did they seem to remember (v35)? But what was the problem with this response (v36)? Why weren't their words to God true (v37)? But what is He full of (v38a)? So that He did what? What didn't He do (v38b)? How often (v38c)? How do v38c–d describe this forgiveness? Why did He forgive them (v39)? What about them did He remember? What did they do to Him, where, and how often (v40–41)? To Whom did they do this (v41)? Though He remembered their weakness (v39), what reality (v42a) and event (v42b) didn't they remember? What had He done, where (v43)? What specific actions do v44–48 specifically describe? What effect should the vividness of these have had upon their memory and their response?

Why are we so needy of God's means? Psalm 78:32–48 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these seventeen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we are needy of God's means because our self-deceiving hardness of heart has no remedy other than converting grace.**

Why we need God's means/grace: self-deception. God has given to His church His own testimony and law (v5). He uses the teaching of these from one generation to the next (v5c–6) to bring future generations to hope in God (v7a) and not forget His works (v7b) but keep His commandments (v7c). Today's portion of the Psalm underlines why this is so necessary: the hardness and deceitfulness of our hearts. Even after God's blessing them with manna (v23–25) and striking them by plague with the quail (v26–31), still they sinned (v32a). They still did not hope in His salvation (v32b, cf. v22b).

Alarming, however, they thought that they had repented (v34–35). They thought that their repentance was earnest (v34b). They thought that they remembered God as their Rock and Redeemer (v35), but it was all ideas and feelings to them, and not an act of the will to put their trust in Him. For, v42 states plainly that they did not, in fact, remember His power.

The more that we know our capacity for self-deception, the less weight we will give to moments in which we thought that we had earnestly sought and remembered God. We will know that the final analysis of such moments may well be that of vv36–37: that all of that religious fervor and zeal was ultimately mere flattery and lying that would not stand fast unto faithfulness.

God's remembering is better hope than ours. If our seeming to remember God cannot be a good basis of hope, what can? God's remembering us! His remembering in v39 is set over-against their "remembering" in v35, 42. We may not remember His strength, but He remembers our weakness. Praise be to God Who is full of compassion (v38a)! Here is a lesson for those who struggle with whether they have been sincere with God: look away from yourself and to Him! Whatever repenting we have is only by His grace, and it is muddled with much insincerity and self-deception that comes from our flesh. But His power is sure, and His compassion is great, and His knowledge of us is perfect.

Wonders can't melt hard hearts, but God has given His Word to do so. What does the Lord know about us? He knows exactly what He puts on Abraham's lips in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. If we do not listen to Moses and the prophets, then neither will we be persuaded if someone rises from the dead (cf. Lk 16:31). So hard is the sinfulness of the heart that wonders will not melt it. But God has given His Word for that very purpose! The abundant mercy which spared Israel corporately and covenantally has also given the preaching of His testimony and law as a means by which the sinner may be given a heart of flesh, born again unto a living hope (cf. 1Pet 1:3). Only the power of God can melt the heart and bring us at last into His rest (cf. 1Pet 1:5), and it is especially through His Word that He exercises this power (v5, cf. 1Pet 3:10–14).

If ever we thought that there could be a demonstration of God's works that would be enough to eliminate our unbelief, that idea dies at the feet of vv43–48 (and indeed v49–51 from the next portion). As the poetry uses words to paint pictures, we remember the events of Exodus 7–12 and realize just how great and vivid the experience of these wonders must have been. There is no amount or intensity of evidence that can bring a dead heart to faith!

What might you feel is keeping you from believing? What is really keeping you from faith or stronger faith? What is the only power that can overcome this? What is the primary means by which He does it?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for the many, marvelous displays of Your power. Forgive us for how deceitful and hard our hearts are. In Your great compassion, remember our weakness! Truly, there is no wonder so great as the death and resurrection of Christ. But, left to ourselves we will not benefit from our intellectually recollecting what You have done. Give us to attend upon the preaching of Your Word, and attend our hearing of it by the ministry of Your Spirit, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP78F "They'd Tum and Seek God Eagerly" or TPH78 "O My People, Hear My Teaching"

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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)

Psalm 78 verses 32 through 48. These are God's words. In spite of this, they still sinned and did not believe in his wondrous works. Therefore, their days, he consumed in futility. And their years in fear. When he slew them, then they sought him and they returned and sought earnestly, forgot.

Then they remembered that god was a rock and the most high god that redeemer. Nevertheless, they fluttered him. With their mouth. And they lied to him with their tongue for their heart was not steadfast with him. Nor were their faithful in his covenant. 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. Breath that passes away. And does not come again. 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. Did not remember his power. The day when he redeemed them from the enemy. When he worked his signs in Egypt. And his wonders in the field of zoan turned their rivers into blood and their streams that they could not drink.

He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them and frogs, which destroyed them. He also gave their crops to the caterpillar and their labor to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost. We also gave up their cattle to the hill. And their flocks to fiery lightning.

So far. The reading of god's. Inspired and inherent word.

There's a great. Trap that we can fall into. In the christian life of, Resting upon our experiences or feelings that we have had Thinking that because of how vivid the experience is or how sincere the Emotion. Feels That. This is what? Uh, verifies that our repentance and faith are authentic.

Or. Knowing that our repentance and faith are not what they should be. And thinking that if we could just have a vivid enough experience, Or a sincerely enough felt emotion. That, that would verify. That are repentance and faith. Are genuine. The fact the matter is nothing can verify The genuinness of our repentance and faith, except God's work.

And the great way that god works in us, Is not the vividness of experience. Or how sincerely felt are our emotions. The lord is according to his pattern, the last six thousand years. Unlikely to outdo for us. Vividness of experience. Um, Over that which the exodus generation got to experience.

Watching. As the river turns to blunt. And swarms of flies. Uh, picking especially Um, The first plague the flies in which got made a distinction. And all of egypt black with flies, except question, where there wasn't a fly The experience of the frogs. The destruction of the crops first with Uh, the locusts.

And then with the hail, And if we were to go on to the portion that we're We're hoping to have next week by god's help. The death of all of the firstborn in egypt. And that night of the Passover, Knowing that god was sparing. The firstborn of israel. And the flaw, the Being led like a flock through the wilderness.

The pillar of cloud fire. Those of you who, Were with us. Well, we read last night and Remembering the, The missionary. Before iran was technologically developed. Was talking about how you have to have a light in the wilderness, not just a path. Because if it's dark, you're going to go right off of that path.

But they had the teller of fire at night as their light, the passing through the red sea. Do we think that we are going to have? More vivid supernatural experience than that. And yet, what did it do for them? In spite of this still, they sent Is the testimony of verse 32 yet they tested and provoked the most high god.

Is the testimony. Of verse 56. Now, the sinning and this testing of god, it wasn't even with great self-awareness. Because they sincerely thought that they were repenting. When he slew them, they sought him and they returned and sought earnestly. Forgot. They thought they were seeking earnestly. Forgot. They remembered that god was their rock and the most high god, their redeemer.

They had good theology. About god. And they thought they were holding to that theology. Verses 34 and 35 our emotionally sincere. Theologically sure. And yet because of the greatness of our capacity for self-deception. Completely. Disastrously. False. Nevertheless. They flattered him with their mouth. Lied to him with their tongue.

So what's the solution? Well, the first great solution is not. To hope and how we remember god verse. 35, they remembered god that god was their rock. Because they thought they were remembering god, but god's. Assessment verdict and verse 42 is. They did not remember his power. The day when he redeemed them from the enemy.

So there's remembering and there's remembering. There is remembering, that is A merely intellectual exercise with which we comfort ourselves. And then there is the remembering that is the stirring up of spirit given faith. To know and embrace God. In life, in reality. To be who he says he is.

That knowing that melts are disobedience and stirs off. Our Our loves so that we hate that disobedience and we want to obey Because he is ours. And he has made ourselves his own. That convincing of the hearth that only the spirit does. Well. If? Vivid experiences and sincerely felt emotions aren't the primary way that God does that.

Then what is Well, we have it in this song, it's one of the great themes of this song. Verse 5. For he established a testimony in jacob. And appointed a law in israel. Which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. 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. What does it look like to actually remember for seven? But keep his commandments. And may not be like their fathers. A stubborn and rebellious generation. So what's he saying? He's saying god's words on the lips, not of faithful fathers.

But god's words on the lips, even of sinful fathers, Are his appointed means. For doing what the vivid experience of the plagues in egypt. Couldn't do what the vivid experience of god's miracles in the wilderness. Couldn't do. What the sincerely felt emotions. Of. Self-unaware. Self-deceiving sinners like we are.

Couldn't do. Broad's word. In the assembly week by week. In the home day by day, what he is giving us now So good as our god. So that we come not to hope in how we remember him. But to hope that the god who has given us this word, Has given it to us because he is remembering us.

Look, we are not full of sincerity or truth or obedience. But look at verse 38. He being full of compassion. Forgave their iniquity? Verse 39, for he remembered. That they were, but flash. Breath that passes away. And does not come again. And so, it is his being full of compassion.

It's his being authentic. That is the key. To our salvation. It's his remembering us, not our remembering him. Because his word. Is not a breath that passes away. We are the breadth of passes away. So what does he do? He gives us his word. He gives us for fathers.

To teach their children and one generation to teach the next generation. Fathers the children in the house. One generation the next generation in the assembly. And his spirit makes his word that is genuine and sincere. To be the means by which he works in us. And so, we can admit.

Whenever his word pricks, our conscience. Whenever we are aware that we are not being wholehearted. Toward god, we can admit that. We are like that. Because our hope is that he is like, he says he is And that he is working in us. By the word that he has given us in the spirit.

Who is the lord? Who works in us by that word. It's asking to do so. Our father in heaven, we know that what you say about Centers, is true of us. We are sinners. We know that we can't trust. Our experiences, our Theological certainty. Our Emotional sincerity. We must trust you.

We must trust that you remember us. We must trust that your word. Will never pass away. And so we look to you, we ask for the help of your spirit, we ask That he would work in us, genuinely. What, so many generations who have gone before? Falsely thought was true of them.

Oh, lord, do not give up us or our children. To the same end. As such generations came to But we do praise you that there are many in whom you work. Genuine faith. And that it is your will that they should not come into the full inheritance without us.

And so keep us. We pray by your word. Make it to dwell richly in us. Fill us with your holy spirit. And bring us safely all the way home in jesus christ. And his name, reactant. Amen.