

Introduction –Wherever we turn, the voice of the LORD speaks mightily through all Old Testament prophets. As part of our spring Bible notes, we return to Asaph, an inspired servant of God, who, under David’s leadership, led the worship of God’s people. May our studies of Asaph, one of David’s choir directors, give us real encouragement as we see that the Holy Spirit was not just given to a select few of God’s people in olden times; rather, all God’s people were indeed led by the Spirit of God through all the ups and downs of life, Isaiah 63:14:

Like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.

Monday: read Psalm 72:18-73:1. Members of David’s choir not only sang the Psalms which David gave them, but apparently wrote some themselves, as, for example, is the case in Psalm 42, attributed to “the sons of Korah.” Significantly, Psalm 42 begins “Book Two” of the Psalter, just as Psalms 73-83, written by Asaph, begin “Book Three.” Throughout the first 72 Psalms, David’s authorship predominates, so that the whole collection is called “the prayers of David son of Jesse,” which end in Psalm 72:20. But is it not also encouraging to hear the songs of these other musicians in Israel and to see their compositions introduce new sections of this mighty hymn book we call the Psalms? Truly God’s Spirit is very generous, gifting many among His people for the high calling of worship – even giving their compositions places of honor at the beginning of different sections of the Psalms.

Meditate and Pray: Ask the Lord to encourage even “new-comers” in our church family to wholeheartedly give themselves to the worship of God. Just as God “shared” the Spirit that was on Moses with the elders of Israel in Numbers 11:16-17, so David “shared” of that same Spirit with his choir-directors, and those who engaged in worship along with their king. May our King Jesus likewise abundantly pour out a fresh spirit of praise on all our worship (and service) as a church body, encouraging all of us to contribute as the Spirit of Christ leads.

Tuesday: read Psalm 73:1 and 1 Chronicles 16:4-6. The author of Psalms 73-83, Asaph, is our focus this week. 1 Chronicles 16:4-5 identifies him as a chief choir director who led Israel in “petition, giving thanks, and praising the Lord God of Israel.” What a mandate! Praise was to be central to his calling, as the verbs to “give thanks” and to “praise” make clear. But what about “making petition”? How would that fit into Asaph’s calling? Well, alongside the NIV’s to “make petition,” there are many other translations of this verb, e.g.: “to record” (KJV); “to invoke” (ESV); “to celebrate” (ASV) or “to have in mind the works of the Lord” (Wycliffe). The basic root is “to remember,” but with a special emphasis in the Psalms on recounting *from history* the praise-worthy deeds of the LORD.

Meditate and Pray: Ask God to give you a good memory of all His mighty deeds of salvation in the history of His people and in your life as well, using the words of hymn # 99, verses 1 & 2:

*My song forever shall record
The tender mercies of the Lord;
Thy faithfulness will I proclaim,
And every age shall know Thy Name.*

*I sing of mercies that endure,
Forever builded firm and sure,
Of faithfulness that never dies,
Established changeless in the skies.*

Wednesday: read Psalm 77:7-12. Though Asaph was a great leader of *corporate* worship and must have been used to leading *huge* Levitical choirs (remember, under David there were no less than 4,000 Levites who were to “praise the Lord with musical instruments,” 1 Chronicles 23:5), here in Psalm 77:7-9, we see Asaph writing honestly of his own struggles. He even goes so far as

to allege that God's unfailing love and faithful promises appear to have disappeared! Yet, what is it that brings Asaph back to the place of renewed faith? It is the word found in Psalm 77:11 - two times: the word we translated yesterday as "*to record*," "*to invoke*" or "*to have in mind the works of the Lord*." In short, Asaph commits himself to *remembering*! No wonder one scholar has said that the basic world-view of the Old Testament is approximately the same as a "row-boat," i.e., pointing our little "row-boat of faith" confidently into an unknown future, we look *ever backwards* to the great deeds of God in redemptive history!

Meditate and Pray: Charles Spurgeon said it best, commenting on Psalm 77:11: *Whatever else may glide into oblivion, the marvelous works of the Lord in the ancient days must not be suffered to be forgotten. Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its 7 years of famine, memory, like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries.*

"Lord Jesus, revive our faith by reviving our memories! Amen!"

Thursday: read Psalm 73:1-3. One would think that Asaph, as the director of what Dr. Sinclair Ferguson calls "The Jerusalem National Choir," would be consistently full of God-centered, triumphant praise. But his complaining words and laments in so many of his Psalms (to the point that he admits in Ps. 73:2 that "his feet had almost slipped") show us a struggling believer experiencing something much more akin to our trial-fraught Christian lives. Indeed, as Ferguson goes on to say about Asaph (and his tendency to write laments) in his book, Deserted by God:

"We naturally think of upbeat, extrovert, optimistic, energetic Christians as the most likely candidates to lead our church choirs; understandably so! Asaph seems to have been the opposite; downbeat, introspective, melancholic, struggling. Hardly promising material for a music director in a city-center congregation!"

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that the Psalms speak to our varied discouragements – even when we, like Asaph, are tempted to envy the wicked. Most of all, may the LORD make our worship together as His people to be a sweet corrective to all our spiritual distempers... just as Asaph was corrected in his complaining song when he "entered the sanctuary of God" (Psalm 73:17)!

Friday: read Psalm 77:7-9. Just as Psalm 73 contains Asaph's complaints, so Psalm 77 is yet another song of Asaph which is full of laments! Indeed, out of the twelve Psalms attributed to Asaph (50; 73-83), at least five of them are classified as "laments." That should comfort us, to see how this great musician is moved by the Holy Spirit to write in a way that so identifies with the people of God in all their trials! How honest and comforting the Scriptures are!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for His humility and His willingness to help his own – even helping his complaining saints to write songs full of the minor chords of bitter complaint, songs that are true to life for believers of every age! What a God we have to compose such songs for us... Surely God must indeed be One who "collects our tears in a bottle" (Psalm 56:8, KJV). Let us therefore sing to Him honestly - *not just* when we feel good or happy, but *even when* our souls are consumed with doubt, even as hymn # 430, verses 4 & 5 express so well:

*Rough paths my feet have trod,
since first their course began;
feed me, thou Bread of God;
help me, thou Son of Man.*

*For still the desert lies
my thirsting soul before;
O living waters, rise
within me evermore.*