

Psalms 77:1-20
“What To Do When God Feels Distant”

~ INTRO ~

THIS MORNING...

- We're going to study (Psalm 77) NLT.
- Where we see a character named Asaph.
 - He was a Levite appointed by **King David**...
 - To lead the people in worship – (1 Chron. 16:4-5)

YET... HIS STORY... SHOWS THE STRUGGLE OF FAITH.

- He was a mature believer who served God faithfully...
 - But he experienced deep discouragement...
 - Sleepless nights AND even difficult questions.

HAVE YOU HAD THOSE MOMENTS...

- When you feel too weak to pray...
 - When your emotions feel dead...
 - And when your outlook is dark?

IDEA #1 – PAINFUL CONDITIONS: (vv.1-6) NLT

(v.1) Notice that Asaph's first response...

- Wasn't to walk away from God... it was to cry out to God.

DISCOURAGED FAITH IS STILL FAITH.

WHEN WE FACE DIFFICULTIES...

- Our human tendency is to look back to better days...
 - As though all hope is lost...
 - AND... only evil days remain.

(Ecc. 7:10) NKJV

*“Do not say, ‘why were the former days better than these?’
For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.”*

CHRISTIAN'S...

- There are difficult seasons we must walk thru...
 - As we follow the Lord.

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EXAMPLE:

- (Ex. 15:22-27) NKJV
 - i. **Trial** (v.23)
 - ii. **Instruction** (v.26)
 - iii. **Rest** (v.27)

God allowed the Hebrew people to face an impossible situation...

- Where they had to learn how to trust Him.
- “*Without faith it’s impossible to please God*” (Heb 11:6)

IDEA #2 – QUESTIONING FAITH: (vv.7-9) NLT

WHEN MOMENTS OF UNCERTAINTY COME...

- And we’re not sure how things will go...
 - We can have confidence in the unchanging character of God.
- We can trust that difficulty is NOT a dead-end road...
 - But a door... to greener pastures (Ps. 23:1-4) NKJV.

OFTEN...

- We experience brokenness before comfort.

Six-Ways the Psalmist questioned FAITH:

- 1) Has the Lord rejected me? (v.7(a))
- 2) Is His kindness done? (v.7(b))
- 3) Is His love gone? (v.8(a))
- 4) Have His promises failed? (v.8(b))
- 5) Has He forgotten grace? (v.9(a))
- 6) Has He slammed the door on me? (v.9(b))

NOTICE...

- None of these questions reveal WHO God is.
 - They only reveal what discouragement feels like.
- Asaph was honest enough to deal with hard questions about faith...
 - AND he was mature enough not to camp-out in hopelessness.

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IN (v.4) Asaph struggled with **sleeplessness**.

- Sometimes discouragement is intensified by...
 - Physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion.

TYPES OF REST:

- a. Passive Rest = Relaxing / quiet time to think / laying low.
- b. Active Rest = Hobbies / exercise / activities not related to your job.
- c. Social Rest = Enjoying time with others... BBQ, coffee, movie.
- d. Spiritual Rest = Lingered with God / repentance & restoration

THE POINT IS...

- Exhaustion has a way of chipping away at our life.

IDEA #3 – THE TURNING POINT: (v.10) NLT

THIS IS THE TURNING POINT FOR ASAPH...

- As he stops obsessing over his feelings...
 - And starts remembering God’s faithfulness.

NOTHING...

- In Asaph's circumstances changed...
 - But **his focus** was different.

IDEA #4 – GAIN PERSPECTIVE: (vv.11-15) NLT

(v.11) He recalled all that God had done.

MANY TIMES...

- The remedy to our situation...
 - Has to do with the way we’re thinking.

THE BIBLE PIN-POINTS...

- The type of thoughts & actions we’re to practice – (Phil. 4:8-9) NLT.

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THE PSALMIST...

- Controlled his thoughts... (vv.11-12).
- We're to filter our thoughts thru God's faithfulness.

IDEA #5 – GOD LEADS THRU THE STORM: (vv.16-20) NLT

ONE OF THE NEGATIVE BYPRODUCTS...

- Of living thru troubling-seasons is a lack of hope.

BUT...

- As we recall God's word...
 - We begin to see the difficult seasons differently.

THE KEY:

- Our faith grows when we remember what God has already done.

THE RED SEA STORY IN (Exodus)...

- Reminds us that God's presence...
 - Is not measured by our ability to see Him.

HE'S STILL WORKING...

- Even when His footprints are invisible...
 - And His voice seems distant.

~ IN CLOSING ~

TAKE THIS WITH YOU...

- When you're hurting... Cry out to God (vv.1-3).
- When you're confused... Tell God the truth (vv.7-9).
- When you're discouraged... Remember what God has already done (vv.11-20).

Asaph looked back to the Exodus.

- But we look back to the Cross of Jesus.