

**SBC – Sept. 7, 2025**  
**Psalm 77:1-20 (NKJV)**  
**“Cure for the Troubled Soul”**

**To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph.**

The Chief Musician is thought to have probably been a leader of choirs or musicians in David’s time.

Jeduthun is also mentioned in Psalm 39 and 62. He was one of the musicians appointed by David to lead Israel in worship (1 Chron. 16:41; 25:1-3).

Asaph was a singer/musician during the time of David and Solomon. The Scripture also says he was a prophet (cf. 1 Chron. 25:1; 2 Chron. 29:30).

***Slide # 1***

**Psalm 77**

***“Cure for the Trouble Soul”***

- vv. 1-9 Seeking God – Remaining Troubled
- vv. 10-15 Refocusing on God
- vv. 16-20 Illustrations of God’s Past Leading

**1 I cried out to God with my voice—To God with my voice; And He gave ear to me.**

The Psalmist cried out to God – double emphasis! And he was convinced that indeed God did hear him.

**2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; My soul refused to be comforted.**

We don’t know what the occasion of trouble was, but obviously it was urgent and intense. He knew where to go – to the Lord. He went to the right place and he sought the Lord intensely – “in the night without ceasing.”

And yet he found no relief.

**3 I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah**

He was seeking for help from God. He was miserable and overwhelmed.

The sense is, “God, I know you are there – why won’t You help me the way I need to be helped?” – **David Guzik**

**Selah** – reflects a pause – stop and meditate on this.

If we are honest there are times when it just seems like nothing is happening. We pray. We believe in prayer and yet we find no comfort in the struggle. That is really honest stuff. We are all human. We all know the struggle.

#### **4 You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.**

He is progressing in his depression. Things are getting worse. Since God is not responding it’s as if He is holding God responsible for his sleeplessness. And he has gotten himself so worked up that he can’t even speak.

Earlier, he was crying out to God continually, but now he can’t even speak. He is reduced to silence. Someone said, “His woes are too big for utterance.” (Clarke) Reminds me of Job when his friends just sat in silence with him for seven days (Job 2:13). This is an expression of intense internal suffering.

#### **5 I have considered the days of old, The years of ancient times.**

#### **6 I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, And my spirit makes diligent search.**

He thinks back on happier times and calls to remembrance when he used to have a song in the night.

### **Slide # 2**

The night is the time when you wake up and worry. Problems loom large – everything in the dark looks bigger than it really is. That is the time to remember your song in the night. – **J. Vernon McGee**

But is one thing to remember your song in the night and another thing to sing it. At this point, the Psalmist is not singing. He is sighing. It’s almost like this remembrance deepened his depression. “Why can’t he see those times once again – even now?”

As he considered these things, he tried to figure it out. He meditates on these things, searching for answers. That is so human. When things are going badly, we desperately try to figure it out. Our spirit makes “diligent search.” Again, if we are very honest in the really HARD times we too have known these kinds of struggles.

“Spurgeon’s studies of the psalms were produced between 1865 and 1885, and during those twenty years he experienced much ill health, which continued to deteriorate until his death in 1892. He had [health problems] and gout, which left him with swollen, red, painful limbs, so that he frequently could not walk or even write. He had debilitating headaches, and with these physical ills came frightful bouts of depression, leading almost to despair.” (James Montgomery Boice)

In that context, Spurgeon wrote of this psalm: “Alas, my God, the writer of this exposition well knows what thy servant Asaph meant, for his soul is familiar with the way of grief. Deep [narrow valleys] and lonely caves of soul depressions, my spirit knows full well your awful glooms!” (Spurgeon)

Hard times are hard times! There is nothing easy for anyone in the deep depressions of life. And at some time almost everyone will face these types of challenges – even the most spiritual among us.

Asaph now asks six questions. They can be taken in the sense of self-talk rhetorical questions. Taken this way he knows the answer to each question is NO but to jar himself out of his spiritual depression he asks himself these jarring rhetorical questions.

There is a well known story about Martin Luther's wife, Katharina. One day she dressed in all black and a veil in an attempt to prompt Luther out of a bout of deep depression. When Luther asked who was dead, Katharina replied, "God," and then said at least Martin was acting as if God were dead. Thus she sought to call him out of his despair by reminding him of God's faithfulness.

Sometimes we need to be jolted with some serious self-talk to bring us back to where we need to be.

The other way we can take these 6 questions of despair are how Asaph was feeling at this time. This is emotions talking. He of course knows better but this is how he was feeling – which is probably how it should be taken.

**7 Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more?**

**8 Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore?**

**9 Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah**

Will the Lord cast off forever? Of course not, but in the moment it felt like this would never end.

Will God never show favor again? Of course not, but in the moment he emotionally wondered.

Has God's mercy (that is His HESED – His unfailing faithfulness) ceased to be? Of course not, but in the moment his emotions questioned it.

Has God's promise failed? Of course not, but in the moment he wondered about how this fits in.

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Of course not, but it momentarily felt like it.

Has God in anger closed Himself off to mercy (compassion)? Of course not, but again, at the time it felt that way.

***Selah!***

Asaph spoke things that believers rarely feel safe to speak about. Many believers won't risk this kind of honesty. Asaph's honest anguish is worthy of contemplation. – **David Guzik**

Stop and soak in the ramifications of these six questions. Of course they are preposterous. If any of them were true the God of the Bible would not be whom we know Him to be. Still in the deep depression of the struggle emotionally even God's children wrestle with all kinds of thoughts like this.

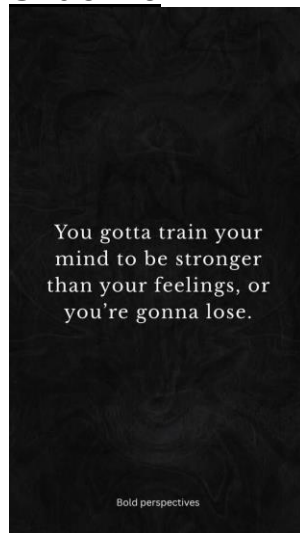
“If you are a child of God, yet never had to ask these questions, you ought to be very grateful; but if you have to ask them, be very thankful that Asaph asked them before you; and believe that, as he had a comfortable answer to them, so shall you. It is always a comfort when you can see the footprints of another man in the mire and the slough, for if that man passed through unharmed, so may you, for his God shall also be your Helper.” **(Spurgeon)**

**10 And I said, “This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.”**

Verse 10 denotes a change of focus! Yes, this has been his anguish but at this point he determines that he will focus on the history of God’s faithfulness and how He has worked on behalf of His people in the past.

In the battle we cannot let our emotions or feelings rule us. Rather, we must come back to what we know is true and function accordingly. As they say, “Never doubt in the dark what you have come to know to be true in the light.”

### **Slide # 3**



In the battle there is often a gap between what we really believe and what we emotionally feel. We have to bring it back to what we have come to know about God. This must be our resting place or we will have no rest at all.

The years of the right hand of the Most High refers to the times when His power was clearly on display for all to see. In those days His power seemed unhindered when His strength (symbolized in the right hand) was clearly evident on behalf of His children.

### **Slide # 4**

**Exodus 15:6 (NKJV)**

**6 “Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.**

**Exodus 15:12 (NKJV)**

**12** You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them.

**11** I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old.

**12** I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds.

At this point, Asaph has determined to focus on the works of the Lord and how He has miraculously worked in times past. He will meditate on these things and talk of them.

Here, Asaph determines to focus on a three-step process to bring about healing and encouragement. 1) He will remember God's great workings in the past; 2) He will meditate on those things; and 3) He will speak of these things with others. At this point his determination is to focus on God-things in remembering, meditating, and talking.

This is a great strategy for depression: Focus totally on God in remembering, meditating, and talking. This is a great prescription for the cure of a troubled soul.

**13 Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God?**

Most translate this as: "Your way, O God, is holy." Holy means that God is set apart – there is none like Him. He is totally unique and incomparable. And so he says, "Who is so great a God as our God?" And of course, the answer is NO ONE!

As he focuses on God he sees once again what a great and incomparable God He is.

**14 You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples.**

He is a miracle-working God! "Wonders" are miracles that cause wonder and awe! Thus, God has shown Himself powerful among the peoples. He did this time and time again in the history of Israel.

Want to see the truth of the true miracle-working God – study the history of Israel, where it was clearly on display, and then, of course, study the ministry of the Messiah – the Lord Jesus Christ, where it was personified all the more.

**15 You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah**

Redeemed is the idea of rescued. Many times through the years, from Jacob to Joseph, God rescued His people from all kinds of troubles.

Selah! He is a God of deliverance. This is a matter of HISTORY! And now he proceeds to illustrate this.

**16 The waters saw You, O God; The waters saw You, they were afraid; The depths also trembled.**

There is a basic consensus that this is talking about God delivering His people in the crossing of the Red Sea. The waters are personified as being afraid and shrinking back at the awesome presence of God.

**17 The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about.**

**18 The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook.**

These details are not named in Exodus 14, but they evidently happened in conjunction with the exodus event, as brought out here.

“Either these are details missing from the original account but preserved in the historical memory of the people or they are a poetic embellishment of the incident.” – **James Montgomery Boice**

The Jewish historian Josephus definitely thought they were a literally part of the Exodus story as recorded here.

He said...

“As soon as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunder-bolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal night oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians.” - **Josephus**

**19 Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, And Your footsteps were not known.**

This speaks of God's miraculous workings in displaying His power over nature. His all powerful way was seen in His control over the sea.

It is thought that the saying, ""Between the devil and the deep blue sea" which depicts a difficult situation involving two equally unfavorable options goes back to this situation where Pharaoh had the children of Israel pinned up against the Sea. They were terrified but Moses said...

### **Slide # 5**

#### **Exodus 14:13 (NKJV)**

**13** And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.

Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD. He was about to do one of the greatest miracles in the history of the world. This is His way in the sea.

### **Slide # 6**

#### **Exodus 14:21–22 (NKJV)**

**21** Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD **caused the sea to go back** by a strong east wind all that night, and **made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided.**

**22** So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea **on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them** on their right hand and on their left.

### **Slide # 7**

#### **Exodus 14:23 (NKJV)**

**23** And the **Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea,** all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

#### **Exodus 14:27 (NKJV)**

**27** And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, **the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it.** So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.



Thus, God did wonders and declared His strength among the peoples (v. 14). God had His way in the sea. He made a path in the great waters. And although His footsteps were not seen or known He led His people all the way. God's people didn't see how God would work and the Egyptians failed to see it before it was too late. But God had His way in all!

William Cowper wrote:

### **Slide # 8**

God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

What a great comfort this truth is. What a great antidote for the troubled soul!

### **20 You led Your people like a flock By the hand of Moses and Aaron.**

God worked miraculously as a great Shepherd in leading His people like a flock and yet at the same time He did it by "the hand of Moses and Aaron." God uses people in the process.

Here we have that mysterious but wonderful mixture of God's sovereign shepherding and yet at the same time the use of human shepherds – whom we often refer to as UNDERSHEPHERDS.

In the first ten verses, Asaph has a king-sized case of introspection. The personal pronouns *I, me, and my* are found over twenty times, while the names of God are found only seven times, and pronouns referring to God seven times. But there is a distinct change at verse 10. In the last ten verses, the personal pronouns are found only three times, whereas nouns and pronouns referring to Deity are used over twenty times. – **William MacDonald**

Our focus makes all the difference!

*"The message of this psalm is that to brood on sorrow is to be broken and disheartened, while to see God is to sing on the darkest day. Once we come to know that our years are of His right hand, there is light everywhere." (G. Campbell Morgan)*

Asaph had some difficulties during this troubling period, but in the end he came to FOCUS on God's shepherding care of His people (cf. Ps. 23).

We, too, can trust the great Shepherd to lead us in whatever we are going through. For He is not only a GREAT Shepherd but also a GOOD Shepherd (cf. Ps. 78:52; 79:13; 100:3).

TRUST Him!