

Don't Forget!

Psa. 78

Introduction:

1. Since ancient times the people of God have as their main parental responsibility to communicate God to their children.
2. Some of us are more or less successful in this endeavor. But we are constantly fighting the influence of the world and more often than not it too is more or less successful.
3. Then there are others who are so overwhelmed with the mind of the world that they see no need to communicate God to their children.
4. These children are quickly engulfed in the darkness and most often never come to the light.
5. But there are voices that call to us saying, "Don't forget the Lord!" One of those voices is recorded in Psa. 78. Derek Kidner calls it "a sermon from history." There are other such "history lessons" recorded in the Psalms (cf. 105, 106, 135, 136).
6. Psa. 78 reminds the nation of Israel of God's activity among them. It is a testimony to God's presence, a testimony to their unfaithfulness, and a testimony to God's compassion even though they are unfaithful. And it constitutes a call for us to NOT be like them but to put our confidence in the Lord who gives us a Shepherd who cares.

Discussion:

I. The call to listen (1-4).

A. Listening is often hard.

1. If I were to tell you that Psa. 78 is the second longest Psalm, second only to Psa. 119, and that I was going to read it in your hearing some of you might groan.
2. We are prone to do more talking than listening. This is particularly the case for those of us that think we know more than others.

B. But "fathers" among the people of God have had more history with the Lord than their children. Children need to listen and learn about the activity of God among His people and "fathers" need to speak about the activity of God among His people.

II. The Lord established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel (5)

- A. God has provided a curriculum of instruction (cf. Deut. 6:1-25).
- B. The history is recorded. Even for those yet to be born.
- C. The instruction in summary (v. 7-8).

III. What the fathers had done.

- A. Ephraim was equipped to defeat their enemies, but were defeated.
 - 1. They did not keep the covenant of God.
 - 2. They refused to walk in His law.
 - 3. They forgot His deeds.
- B. What God had done (11-16).
- C. What they did (17-20).
 - 1. Continued to sin.
 - 2. Rebelled.
 - 3. Put Him to the test.
 - 4. Spoke against Him.
 - 5. Questioned His ability to provide.
 - 6. Questioned His willingness to provide.
- D. God's response (21).
- E. What was wrong? (22).
- F. What God did (23-29).
 - 1. He gave them their desire.
 - 2. Angry because of their unfaithful response.
- G. What they did and how God responded (32-33).
- H. They returned and searched diligently, but then deceived Him and turned away (34-37).
 - 1. Ladies and gentlemen this sounds a warning to us to remember, to be faithful, to be faithful continually.
 - 2. Not just in our generation, but inter-generationally.
 - 3. Robert Turner argued that departures from the faith are often accomplished in three generations.
 - a. The first, studies the Bible independently and reaches sound conclusions.
 - b. The second, inherits and accepts the conclusions, with their accumulated terminology, but does not understand the reasoning behind them.
 - c. The third, will likely hold to the terminology, but grasp neither the reasons for, nor the applications of the conclusions.
 - d. They condone all sorts of changes as long as they are couched in familiar words.
 - e. Eventually the terminology is abandoned and there is no pretense of holding the same biblical conclusions.
- I. How do you break this cycle?
 - 1. God breaks the cycle by His compassion (38-39).
 - 2. He forgives and does not give what they deserve.
 - 3. Some hear and are softened. They are humbled and repent. Cf. Titus 3:3-7.
- J. God continued to act in graciousness even though they rebelled (40-58).
 - 1. He was filled with wrath.
 - 2. He abandoned them to the consequences of their rebellion (59-64).

- K. But then the Lord broke the cycle through David (65-72).
 - 1. God chose David to deliver Israel from her enemies.
 - 2. He used David to build His sanctuary. David built the temple. The constant reminder of God's presence among His people.
 - 3. Through David God shepherded His people.

IV. And the history is repeated.

- A. George Santayana said that those who forget the lessons of history are destined to repeat them.
- B. Hegel is supposed to have said, "The only thing we learn from history is that we never learn from history."
- C. Israel's history is repeated.
 - 1. The Bible records the on-going history of God's people from David and on-ward. Except for a few exceptions like Josiah and Hezekiah the kings of God's people and the nation itself was dominated by the repeated pattern of rebellion against God.
 - 2. Overcome by Babylon, a remnant was taken into captivity the descendants of whom become the characters of the N.T.
 - 3. God's faithfulness is continually evident. He sent forth His son whom they crucified. Stephen summarized it well. "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it" (Acts 7:51-53).
 - 4. Stephen's generation rejected God's second David, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep.
 - 5. It is a tiresome thing to preach the faithfulness of God to a faithless and rebellious people.
 - a. They question God's faithfulness in their wilderness.
 - b. They demand that He respond to their desires.
 - c. They balk when it is time to place their trust in Him to go forward.
 - d. They have no confidence in His promises, nor in His compassion.
 - e. Even reminders of His past provision fall on unbelieving ears.
 - 6. But it is not just in the culture generally. It is not just in the church. It is in our families and in our hearts. It is a spiritual breakdown. Just as in the Judges—"there arises another generation . . . who does not know the Lord or the work that He has done for Israel" (Judges 2:10, ESV).

V. Let us step forward with our every resource to perpetuate the heritage of faithfulness. Let us be courageous and put our confidence in God. Let us not step back into the shadows of darkness, but forward with a clarion voice to advance the grace of God. What can I do?

- A. Learn the history.
- B. Believe in the God who acts.
- C. Put your confidence in Him, not in yourself.
- D. Now teach it to others.
 - 1. Stimulate others to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24).
 - 2. Receive the equipping (Eph. 4:11ff).
 - 3. Use the gifts that you are given (Rom. 12:6-8).
 - 4. Do that which builds up (Rom. 15:1-2).
- E. Be faithful even in the face of death (Rev. 2:10).

Conclusion:

- 1. Don't forget the history.
- 2. Believe it.
- 3. Act in faithfulness.