

“I Will Remember”

When the Soul Is Overwhelmed

Psalm 77

This psalm was written by Asaph, but it was given “to *Jeduthun*,” one of the chief musicians appointed by David. In other words, this psalm of struggle was meant to be sung in public worship. That tells us that seasons of spiritual conflict are not unusual, even for God’s people. Psalm 77 records a night when prayer brought no relief, when memory brought no comfort, and when the soul wrestled with hard questions about God’s character, but it does not end there. This psalm shows us how faith survives when confidence seems to falter. Its turning point is simple and deliberate: *I will remember*.

I. THE CONFLICT WITHIN (VS. 1-6)

This section is intensely personal. The dominant feature is first-person language — “I,” “my,” “me” saturate the verses. The conflict is internal.

A. A cry that will not cease (vs. 1-2)

“I cried unto God with my voice...”

1. *“I cried”* (צָעַק) — often used for a desperate cry for help. This is not speaking of a casual cry — it is an urgent appeal.
2. The repetition of *“unto God with my voice”* intensifies the distress. As we’ve seen before in the psalms when something is repeated like this, it is designed to be emphatic.
3. *“In the day of my trouble”* (בְּיוֹם צָרָתִי) — this

carries the idea of tightness, constriction; being hemmed in. This is psychological pressure rather than physical pressure, considering the content of this psalm.

When his trouble came, the psalmist did the only thing he could do — he *"sought the Lord."*

4. *"My sore ran in the night"*

- a) The word for "sore" (יָדָי) is a common Hebrew word and is translated by the word "hand" or "hands" the vast majority of the time.
- b) "Ran" (רָגַר) means to pour out — as water poured out on the ground.
- c) Together, the view here is one of agony that would not go away, and one that grew worse in the silence of the night — and it *"ceased not."*

5. *"My soul refused to be comforted"*

- a) Comfort was available (*"I sought the Lord"*), but it was rejected in his heart and mind.
- b) The pain he was in, whether physical or psychological (or both), was so intense, he couldn't get past it at this point. This wasn't rebellion on the part of the psalmist; it was exhaustion.

Psalm 42:3

³ My tears have been my meat day and night,
while they continually say unto me, Where is thy
God?

B. Memory that intensifies pain (vs. 3)

- 1. *"I remembered God, and was trouble..."*

- a) *"Troubled"* (רָמָה) — to murmur, grow, roar, be in tumult. It's used of the sea in agitation (Is. 17:12).
- b) The idea from the psalmist is that his memory was not calming him — it is stirring him.
- 2. *"I complained"* (שִׁיחַ) — speak within oneself (translated "commune" in verse 6). This was inward perspective, not outward protest.
- 3. *"My spirit was overwhelmed"* — literally, my spirit fainted, or grew feeble.

C. Sleepless searching (vs. 4-6)

- 1. *"Thou holdest mine eyes waking"* (vs. 4a)
 - a) He acknowledges God's sovereignty even over insomnia. The psalmist doesn't say, "I can't sleep." He says, *"Thou holdest mine eyes."*
 - b) This is faith under pressure; not faith that has been abandoned.
- 2. *"I am so troubled that I cannot speak"* (vs. 4b)
 - a) Literally, "I was struck dumb."
 - b) This is known as "emotional paralysis."
- 3. *"I have considered the days of old"* (vs. 5)

Intentional review of former works of God.
- 4. *"I call to remembrance my song in the night"* (vs. 6a)

This suggests earlier seasons of deliverance (Job 35:10).

| Job 35:10

¹⁰ But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night;

5. *"I commune with mine own heart..."* — same root as "complained" in verse 3. In this instance, it indicates he was pondering the things going on in his life. He was "thinking over the matter."
6. *"My spirit made diligent search"* (vs. 6c)
 - a) *"Diligent search" (שָׁפַח) — to search thoroughly, investigate.*
 - b) He is probing his own heart.

II. THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE (VS. 7-9)

These six questions seem to relate to one overall question by the psalmist: *If God has not changed, then what explains this darkness I feel?*

A. Fear of rejection (vs. 7)

1. *"Cast off" (רָחַק) — to reject, spurn, abandon*
 2. *"For ever" (לְעוֹלָמִים) — this is a question of permanence.*
 3. *"Be favorable" (יִסֵּיף לְרִצּוֹת) — literally, "Will He add again to show favor?" This is the idea of continued gracious delight.*
- The psalmist isn't saying he fears temporary discipline, but permanent withdrawal.

B. Fear of covenant failure (vs. 8)

1. *"Mercy" (רַחֲמִים) — steadfast love. This is one of the most theologically heavy words in the Old*

Testament.

He's not asking if God has stopped loving — He's asking if his covenant loyalty with His chosen people has stopped.

2. "*Clean gone*" (אָפּס) — to come to an end, to be used up.
3. "*Promise*" (אַמְרָה) — spoken word, declared promise.
4. "*Fail*" (גָּמַר) — to come to an end (similar meaning as that for "clean gone"). The idea is termination.

C. Fear of divine change (vs. 9)

This may be the most painful of these questions.

1. "*Forgotten*" (שָׁכַח) — "Has he passed over mercy in administering his government? Has he ceased to remember that man needs mercy? Has he forgotten that this is an attribute of his own nature?" (Barnes)

Throughout Scripture, God *remembers*. Now, the psalmist asks if God has forgotten.

2. "*Gracious*" (חַנּוּן) — to show favor, mercy freely given.
3. "*Shut up*" (קָפַץ) — to close, shut tight, restrain
4. "*Tender mercies*" (רַחֲמִים) — from a root that means "womb." Speaks of deep compassion, maternal tenderness.

Has God closed the womb of compassion?

5. *"Selah"* — this marks the pinnacle of emotional crisis.

- All six questions expect the answer: No. He asks questions but makes no accusations.
- The crisis the psalmist is demonstrating is theological, not circumstantial. This is why this is a "Crisis of Confidence."

III. THE CHOICE TO REMEMBER (VS. 10-15)

The questions end with *"Selah"* — and no answer, but instead of sinking deeper in despair, the psalmist speaks: *"And I said..."* The crisis has not change — his focus does. *I will remember.*

A. A humble recognition (vs. 10)

1. *"And I said"* — this is a deliberate self-address. He speaks to himself, not to accuse God.
2. *"This is my infirmity"* (חַלְוָתִי) — from root (חָלַה), a word that means weakness, sickness, frailty. He doesn't say that God is unfaithful but that "This is my weakness, my limitation."
3. *"The right hand of the most High"* (יְמִין עֲלִיוֹן) — symbol of covenant power. He shifts focus from his weakness to God's strength.

Exodus 15:6

⁶ Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

B. A deliberate reorientation (vs. 11-12)

1. Notice the repetition: *"I will remember..."*, *"I will*

remember..., *"I will meditate..."*, *"[I will] talk..."*
This speaks of what is called "volitional faith." By that is meant a conscious and deliberate choice to believe God and His Word, emphasizing the role of the will in making that decision. It involves actively choosing to trust and follow God, rather than passively accepting beliefs.

2. He chooses to remember *"the works of the LORD,"* His *"wonders of old,"* and His *"doings."*

C. A renewed vision of God (vs. 13-15)

1. *"Thy way"* (דֶּרֶךְ) — this speaks to God's manner of acting, and ultimately His redemptive pattern.
2. The word translated *"Sanctuary"* (קֹדֶשׁ) is the Hebrew word for "holiness." It can speak of the physical place the Bible calls *"the sanctuary"* (the Holy Place), but it also speaks of the holiness of the sanctuary, and more specifically that the "way" of God is holiness. The emphasis is not so much *where* God's way is, but *what* God's way is — His way is holy, and the physical illustration of that is "the Sanctuary" (the Holy Place) and all the holiness that applies to it.

The phrase in Hebrew literally translates, "God – in holiness – thy way" (it's a verbless phrase).

3. *"Who is so great a God as our God?"* — the tone has changed completely now (vs. 13-14)
4. *"Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people..."*

"Redeemed" (גָּאֹל) — this is that covenant redemption language that is common in the Old Testament and carried into the New Testament

in the redemption provided through Christ.

IV. THE CROSSING THROUGH THE WATERS (VS. 16-20)

Having remembered the mighty works of God, the psalmist now paints the greatest of them — the crossing of the waters. Memory now becomes vision. The Exodus that these verses speak to becomes the answer to the crisis the psalmist faced.

A. The waters that saw their Maker (vs. 16-17)

1. Notice the repetition: "*the waters saw thee... the waters saw thee...*" So, this is emphatic.
2. Creation is personified: "*They were afraid*" (יָחִילוּ)
 - a) From a root word (חָלַל) that means to writhe, tremble, twist (often used of labor pains).
 - b) The sea cannot resist God (nor can any of creation), but will recoil (the picture of the word) before Him.
3. "*The depths*" (תְּהוֹמוֹת) — the deep waters — synonymous parallelism for the first line.
4. In verse 17, the scene expands from sea to storm language: clouds pouring water, skies sending out sound (thunder), and arrows (lightning) flashing.
5. The Exodus is portrayed like an upheaval of creation.

B. The voice that shook the world (vs. 18)

1. This is language that reminds us of the events surrounding Mt. Sinai as described in Exodus 19.

(Exod. 19:16-19).

2. The deliverance at the Red Sea is framed as a theophany — God revealed in power.
3. The same God that the psalmist questioned in verses 7-9 now appears in majesty.

C. The way that was unseen (vs. 19)

1. God made a way where there was no way.
 - a) "Way" (דֶּרֶךְ) — see verse 13 note.
 - b) "Path" (שְׁבִיל) — a track or course.
 - c) "Footsteps" (עֲקֵבוֹת) — tracks, heel marks.
2. But when it was over, no "footprints" remained (*"thy footsteps are not known"*). Deliverance does not always leave visible explanations.

D. The Shepherd who led His people (vs. 20)

The God whose "mercy" seemed "shut up" in verse 9 is seen here guiding like a shepherd. The contrast is deliberate.

Conclusion:

This psalm began in despair but ends in the security of the Shepherd. The crisis the psalmist faced is solved by a deliberate choice: *I will remember*. When the waters rise and God's footsteps seem unseen, faith survives by remembering His holy ways and mighty works.