

Psalm 77

Read Psalm 77:1-3: Mankind is difficult to bring into spiritual maturity. All of our natural inclinations undo what God is trying to accomplish in our lives. Our nature is to want to be left alone.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes (Proverbs 21:2)

The more that we think that we are ok, the more we might be self-deceived. How do you get through to someone who feels that you really have nothing they need? It's tough to get our attention. The answer is an interruption and a course-altering event.

Sometimes it is comparable to being so sick that you throw up. The circumstances of life keep pushing us to release the poisons trapped inside of us; and utter our request to God. I have to thank God for all of the prayers he has answered for me. He has answered at least five significant ones in the last two days. As soon as the request is answered, we focus on something else that takes its place. We need to take stock in this unending grace; brought into focus by life's interruptions.

We follow the path of least resistance. God's ways can be the opposite. For that reason, outside circumstances are like an usher. We can be ushered around to various spiritual check offs, assisted by the circumstances of life.

It is better to know where this is all leading. Otherwise, we can worry ourselves sick about things that seem to be out of control. *Things are never out of control.* God is trying to bring us into his control. Even then; some things cannot be understood without doing them. *Some things just are better caught than taught.* Mere information may not be enough. A newspaper never transformed a person's life...but a car crash might.

We are so slow in trusting things that affect us. We do not want to give up control over our lives. God has to sometimes let us supernaturally-see what is in our path. We may have to get rolled up into a mess to really grasp how dangerous our actions can be.

God is the potter; and we are the clay in his hands. The potter presses down; and forces us to take a new shape. And 'yes' it does take force to get us to make changes. The vessel is formed by pressures on the inside and the outside. He is skilled; and the end result is a beautiful thing that is useful.

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. (Isaiah 64:8)

We do not worry when we see a potter making a vessel; but we do worry when we are the one getting forced into something that we do not like...or when we are squeezed by the circumstances of life. The formation process is something that we do not control. It can push us beyond our desires and our comfort level. We may conclude that our life is a mess; while God is seeing something finally take shape. In reality; our most confident relaxed days may be more dangerous than our more tense maneuvering through hazards. Whatever we do without God is going nowhere.

Sometimes it is not a mere matter of being pressured to take steps towards perfection. Sometimes it is an attempt to get us to just yield. We get so headstrong; and committed to see our plans through. It can take more than a flat tire to get us to question our direction of travel. We can be so consumed with a pursuit that it takes more than a small irritation to make us pull over and pray. God might even have to burn it to the ground. Sometimes we are literally sprinting towards disaster; and God has to pick us off before we do serious damage to ourselves and others. Sometimes we have to become derailed or incapacitated, because have no ears to hear. I can remember when I was hanging on to a failing enterprise like a dog on a bone. It was taking me down; but I would not let go of it.

For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down. 3 There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger; Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. 4 For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. 5 My wounds are foul and festering Because of my foolishness. 6 I am [a]troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. 7 For my loins are full of inflammation, And there is no soundness in my flesh. 8 I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. 9 Lord, all my desire is before You; And my sighing is not hidden from You. 10 My heart pants, my strength fails me; As for the light of my eyes, it also has gone from me. 11 My loved ones and my friends stand aloof from my plague, And my relatives stand afar off. 12 Those also who seek my life lay snares for me; Those who seek my hurt speak of destruction, And plan deception all the day long. 13 But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; And I am like a mute who does not open his mouth. 14 Thus I am like a man who does not hear, And in whose mouth is no response. 15 For [b]in You, O Lord, I hope; You will [c]hear, O Lord my God. 16 For I said, "Hear me, lest they rejoice over me, Lest, when my foot slips, they exalt themselves against me." 17 For

I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me. 18 For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in [d]anguish over my sin. 19 But my enemies are vigorous, and they are strong; And those who hate me wrongfully have multiplied. 20 Those also who render evil for good, They are my adversaries, because I follow what is good. 21 Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, be not far from me! 22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation! (Psalm 38)

Read Psalm 77:4-6: Sometimes we get so stressed out over something; that we lose our composure. It can be a very uncomfortable place. They are uncomfortable enough to force us to take action to find relief. It is like the guy who throws his back out. He is not good for anything else physically or mentally until he gets some relief. In fact; we might settle for less than we had before; as long as the discomfort stops.

Trials cause us to reconsider how things used to be. “How do I get back to that place of peace and comfort?” Sometimes we never are given the reasons for our afflictions. God does give us coping mechanisms. The bible describes ‘*a new song*’ or *a song in the night* as a new thing of comfort that we can find comfort in. The trials may continue; but God can make us stronger, or distract us with a thing of encouragement. Many psalms begin with an uncomfortable predicament; and then they end in an encouraging recognition from God. The circumstances have not changed; but the saint is back at peace.

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. 2 The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the [a]nations. (Psalm 98:1-2)

For me; I have asked God to help me *live above my circumstances*. There are always dual truths in our lives. There is the ground-level perceived conflict in front of us that causes anxiety. At the same time; we see that God just keeps delivering us. So far, God is *batting 1000*. I really should not continue to fear anything. It seems like a cop-out to just draw closer to God when I am faced with a problem. It can almost seem like an irresponsible reaction to my duty at hand. Not so. The solution to horizontal problems is always vertical. God wants to be part of the solution. Our investment into morning prayer and bible study can equate to peace of mind for the day. Just keep moving forward with the small and obvious things. Sometimes I just pick up a broom and clean up and I start praying...and things just start falling into place. I also try to keep up with exercise; and avoid procrastination, in order to keep the burdens from getting heavy.

Read Psalm 77:7-9: Sometimes anticipation and fear of what could come next can be the worst part. Many times, these things are just possibilities of occurring. I can whip myself into a fervor over what could happen.

I can be quick to make generalization when things start *going south*. For some strange reason, everything seems bad when one or two things are pushed back. I can even forget why I am in a bad mood. Likewise; I can project an unfavorable situation to be permanent. The more that I want out; the more impatient I become...and the more pessimistic I become.

Bad moods take away our energy, and our desire to engage and focus. Anger stops all creativity, desire, and focus. God has instructed us to be intellectually honest; but not get carried away. We have to have a reset button. *The scriptures and prayer takes us to a completely different place of healing.*

“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, 27 nor give place to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Read Psalm 77:10-15: We learn to find comfort in our interests and pastimes. GThat can be ok; unless that is what we are living for. We may never believe that we worship our own entertainment; but what tale does our heart tell? Do we minimize our time with God; and maximize our time on what amounts to spiritual junk food? Setbacks cause us to reconsider a more spiritual life. Spirituality is more than fire insurance. That is a miserable way to live. That duality pinches us from both sides. We can see the shallowness of this world: but we haven't learned to take rest in God. We surround ourself with non-spiritual stuff that leaves us wanting. Lot was not chasing anything evil; but he was not living a holy life. God let him get kidnapped and be miserable. Once we are filled with the Holy Spirit; it is going to beckon to heaven. Lot was surrounding himself with unrighteous things. His family did not even think of him as a man of faith. He blended into a Sodom too well. In fact; he was on the City Council. If God allows us to get uncomfortable; it might be time to change things up. Anyone can get used to living in a hamster cage over time.

...and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked 8 (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— 9 then the Lord knows how to deliver the

godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, (2 Peter 2:7-9)

God always has delivered me. We can say that we trust God until something pops up in our lives. Why do I fear the next outcome; as though God was an unproven force? I must have some serious trust issues that are deep seated. Regardless, it proves the point that we need to redirect our focus back onto God every day. It is healthy to reflect on the hundreds or thousands of deliverances God has done for me. Why would that change?

Read Psalm 77:16-20: God gives us mountain top experiences to reflect on. The exodus story is full of powerful and observable images of God's power. We all want God's power of deliverance from pain; but not so much for our corrections. He is like a concerned parent who intervenes into the life of their drug addicted adult child. There will be cursing and kicking and frustration; but he needs to keep pulling us out of harm's way.

God wants us to know that he is able to move mountains for us. Some people have one great experience that they try to repeat or somehow memorialize. That is a little sad. It is much like the high school quarterback star, who does nothing else for the rest of his life. Christianity gets stale and rancid if it is not growing. If it is to remain alive; it has to go and grow. We are being prepared to go forward and fulfill the calling for our future...not to be tied to our past.