

# “Where is Your Appeal?”

by Pastor Steve Hammond on 3/29/2020  
Text: Psalm 77 at FBC of Newport, NH

//7 *“Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again?  
8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time?  
9 Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”*

10 *Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.  
11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.  
12 I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.”//*

—Psalm 77:1-4

This psalm is written by one of David’s choir leaders and it seems to come from personal experience. And though we don’t know what that experience was exactly, he clearly was deeply troubled. He was crying out to God day and night, yet God was taking a long time getting back to him. He was remembering God, but it felt like God was not remembering him. And the more he meditated and remembered “the former days” (more blessed than the present ones, evidently) all he came up with was more and more questions and less and less sleep.

7 *“Will the Lord reject forever? Will he never show his favor again?  
8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time?  
9 Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion?”*

Sound familiar? Even though we might have a whole new set of questions keeping us up at night? “How long is this going to go on?” everyone is asking. What *is* going on? Is this a curse from God? Is this a manmade problem? Or both? Will we ever see those normal, blessed days again, at work, at school, at church, at the grocery store?

Will this get worse? What good will come of it? Will I live to see it?

One thing that stands out about the questions in this psalm and the questions we might have today, is that both are primarily personal questions. A lot of other people may be asking them, but it’s one at a time. Here, it is the person in the psalm who is being kept up at night asking them. And it is you, not some stranger on the news or someone speaking a foreign language, asking these questions. And wondering where the answers are.

We ourselves are in the middle of this. We are in the place of questions and confusion. And that is the beauty of this Psalm.

Not only is it in the middle of the book of Psalms and in the middle of the Bible itself, but it is in the middle of a problem that only seems to raise questions. And if you wait until the problem is solved in order to get all your answers it will be too late. Because in spite of everyone “sheltering in place” and putting life on hold, Life is actually carrying right along. Have you noticed that? The sun comes

out, the snow comes and goes. Spring is here and soon Easter will be upon us. Life isn't waiting around for us to answer these questions and solve this invisible plague before moving on. Life is always moving on. That's what life does.

Gratefully, the psalmist isn't waiting around either. He gets nowhere with his own questions and worries. When he recognizes this he changes his approach. He repents; he changes his mind, which is what repentance is.

*//10 Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. 11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. 12 I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."//*

The psalmist makes an appeal to God who "stretched out his right hand." By this he means when God did his best work, that which best represents him most powerfully. At first it seems like he is talking about all God's many miracles, and he's not excluding the idea of them (as they all point in his direction), but it soon becomes evident that he has one particular time period and one particular miracle in mind. It was the time when God redeemed Israel, freeing her from the bondage of Egypt. And it was the climactic miracle that opened the pathway for Israel to cross an impossible barrier of water—on dry land—and finished off Pharaoh's army once and for all. It was the parting of the Red Sea.

*//16 The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. 17 The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. 18 Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. 19 Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen.//*

To *this* the psalmist appealed. And in this he found satisfaction for whatever was plaguing him. He didn't need specific answers to all his questions, nor did he need his problem to go away immediately. By appealing to this mighty work of God's right hand he had what his heart most needed. He had the heart of God ... hearing him, caring for him, redeeming his people and rebuking his enemies. Even from the vantage point of having taken place in the distant past, this act was so powerful its reverberations reached him down through the ages and calmed his spirit simply by his recollection and his faithful appeal.

I hope you know where I'm going with this, because I'm already there. That time period was the origin of Passover and the birth of Israel as a nation. And it is that which is the background for what Jesus did to redeem, not just Israel, but the Gentile world as well. That we be one people of God redeemed at the cross and resurrection of God's Son. This is our appeal. That is, if we will use this time of pausing for more than a time of panic. It is an opportunity for all the world. This is the time to repent, remember and make appeal to the right hand of God in the name of Jesus Christ who reveals God's heart of love most perfectly and powerfully ... and calms all hearts believing.