



April 30 2017

Psalm 78

"When Life is Good, Don't Forget God"

Pastor Gary Hamrick

A crisis usually drives us to God, and trouble in our lives tends to move us toward God. But what about when life is good? What happens when things are going well? Our natural tendency is to forget God when life is good. In fact, the good life is a threat to a godly life. But, it doesn't have to be that way. We can learn to enjoy the goodness and blessings of God and still live a godly life. In this message, Pastor Gary will help us learn from the mistakes of the Israelites.

Historical Background

1. A maskil is a Hebrew term that means it was written to teach others.
2. God inspired this psalm, but it was written to the people of God.
3. **Psalm 119** is the longest psalm and **Psalm 78** is the second longest.
4. Loudoun County ranked first among the Top 10 Happiest U.S. Counties, according to a survey by Smartasset.com! ¹
5. Loudoun County ranked first among the top ten healthiest counties in the Commonwealth of Virginia! ²
6. CNN Money ranked Leesburg #35 of the best places to live in America! ³
7. Pastor Gary said: "The good life is a threat to the godly life."

¹ <https://smartasset.com/mortgage/the-happiest-places-in-america-2016-edition>

² <http://loudounnow.com/2017/03/29/loudoun-ranks-healthiest-county-in-virginia-again/>

³ <http://time.com/money/collection/best-places-to-live-2013/>

8. [Hosea 13:6](#) – *“When I fed them, they were satisfied; when they were satisfied, they became proud; then they forgot me.”*
9. This psalm is a historical narrative of the nation of Israel, in which Asaph pointed out the cyclical nature of Israel’s relationship with God.
 - a. In [Psalm 78:32–39](#), we see what happened: When God blessed them, they became comfortable; When they became comfortable, they forgot about God; When they forgot about God, they started sinning and rebelling; When they started sinning and rebelling, God punished and disciplined them; When God punished and disciplined them, they were sorry for their sin and rebellion and God forgave them; When God forgave them, life got better again.
10. This psalm is basically about the importance of keeping a consistent, vibrant walk with God when things are going relatively well.
11. Approximately 450 years before Asaph wrote this psalm – around 1450BC – God drove out the people of Canaan, and God led the Israelites into the land of blessing.
12. Pastor Gary said: “Asaph [wrote] [Psalm 78](#) to his generation, and he [said], “... our forefathers forgot God, they enjoyed his blessing so much, [and] they got so comfortable [that] they didn’t see their need for him anymore. They abandoned him. Don’t let this happen to you!” And Asaph [even] went [so far as] to say: ‘If you don’t get this, the very survival of the next generation hangs in the balance. If your kids don’t see you honoring God when times are good, as well as when times are bad, they will forget him just like you.’ [He warned them] about how this needs to be the disposition of every follower of God so that the next generation can know God too.”
13. [Psalm 78:4–8](#) – *“We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. They would not be like their forefathers – a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.”*

Guard Against Discontentment

14. **Psalm 78:18-20** - *"They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, 'Can God spread a table in the desert? When he struck the rock, water gushed out, and the streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?' "*
15. Pastor Gary said: "The problem with the Israelites... was that the goodness of God was just not good enough... They always wanted more, which led them to question whether God was even capable of giving them more... The faithfulness of God in times past did not translate in their minds, as it should [have], about the faithfulness of God for times future... They saw what God did but it just wasn't good enough. Discontent breeds disbelief."
16. **1 Timothy 6:6** - *"... godliness with contentment is great gain."*
17. We need to remember what **Philippians 4:13** really has to say in context!
 - a. **Philippians 4:12b-13** - *"I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

See The Hand Of God In All Aspects Of Life With Gratitude

18. **Psalm 78:41-43** - *"Again and again they put God to the test; they vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power - the day he redeemed them from the oppressor, the day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan."*
19. Asaph listed six of the ten plagues that God inflicted upon the Egyptians because they refused to let the Israelites go free.
20. **Psalm 78:52-53** - *"But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep through the desert. He guided them safely, so they were unafraid; but the sea engulfed their enemies."*
21. The Israelites failed to remember the mighty hand of God moving on their behalf, and we should not fail to see the hand of God moving in our lives in big ways and little ways.
22. Pastor Gary said: "... God has two hands. Figuratively speaking, he has a visible hand that we call miracles, and he has an unseen hand that we call providence, where he works behind the scenes... God is always at work on your behalf, either

visibly or invisibly, either miraculously or providentially. Don't miss the hand of God. Begin to get eyes that see the many wonderful ways – in the big ways and the little ways of life – that God is blessing you and taking care of you and watching over you. Begin to get a sense for not just the big, amazing things, but in all of the every day ways that God is taking care of you. Don't miss the hand of God... We need to start to develop eyes that begin to recognize the goodness of God, even in the delays, even in the interruptions, even in the inconveniences, because it just might be that for your benefit... God was at work... I don't want to miss God's hand at work. I don't want to attribute good things to good fortune; I want to attribute them to a good God. I want to recognize the miracles of God in the extraordinary and in the ordinary. I want to trust in the providence of God in the little ways and the big ways. And, I believe that God is working on my behalf for my good, therefore, I can thank him in all things."

Stay True To God By Staying True To His Word

23. [Psalm 78:56-58](#) – *"But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High; they did not keep his statutes. Like their fathers they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow. They angered him with their high places; they aroused his jealousy with their idols."*
24. The Israelites were supposed to tear down all of the idols to pagan gods when they came to the Promised Land, but they were not faithful, and instead of being influencers of others, they were influenced by ungodly people.
25. The reason they didn't tear down the idols was because they didn't keep the statutes of God.
26. Pastor Gary said: "If you do not stay true to the Word of God, you will not stay true to the God of his Word. We must be people who understand the priority of Scripture, the commandments of God, the statutes of God, [and] the Law of God. It is important to recognize we need to stay true to God by staying true to his Word. The Bible is not something we should turn to when we are in a critical place. The Bible should be something we turn to when we are in a comfortable place... so [we] can guard [our] heart and [our] mind, so that [we] can be reminded of truth in a relative world. So that [we] can be strengthened against temptation. So that [we] can have the mind of Christ and know the love of God. So [we] can be prepared now for the storms that will come later, because [we] have filled up the reservoir of [our] soul. This is why we need to stay in God's Word."

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Psalm 78:1-8, 32-39](#) to provide the foundation for this study.
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks concerning the reason Asaph wrote this psalm. (See #12 above)
4. What are some of the ways discontentment has affected your life?
5. How does the faithfulness of God in times past translate in your mind so that you can remember that God will be faithful in the future?
6. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:12b-13](#).
7. How would you rate yourself on a "gratitude scale"?
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about God's miracles and God's providence. (See #22 above)
9. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's remarks about staying true to God's Word. (See #26 above)
10. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).