

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
LXXVII. Handling Trials When God Remains Silent
(Psalm 77:1-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

One can wonder how to face a disturbing trial when God seems to remain silent, not giving helpful direction:

(1) Michael Reagan, son of President Ronald Reagan and a professing believer in Christ, in his op-ed, “Media keeps the left uninformed” in the Republican-American, August 15, 2023, p. 8A, gave a long list of grievances over the state of the nation. He blamed “the liberal media” for not informing “half the country . . . who Hunter Biden is, or why he is in trouble for raking in millions for his extended family from foreign businessmen by selling access to his father Joe’s ‘brand’ and political influence.” Mr. Reagan mentioned the “high inflation” caused by the Biden administration, the “crisis at the Southern border,” the crippling of “our oil and gas industries,” the botched “withdrawal from Afghanistan,” the mismanagement of “the war on Covid,” the Justice Department’s excessive “prosecution of Jan. 6 rioters for political reasons,” the Biden FBI’s unfair treatment of “conservative Catholics as possible terrorists,” the “huge homeless populations living on the streets of Los Angeles and San Francisco,” “smash-and-grab gangs in Beverly Hills that go unpunished,” “chained up ice cream freezers in drug stores,” “tens of thousands of illegal immigrants from dozens of countries overwhelming cities like New York and Boston,” and of “Fentanyl Island in Oakland,” California. (Ibid.)

Michael Reagan concluded, “I fear for 2024. I’m truly concerned about Republicans winning back the White House. I don’t think Trump can win . . .” (Ibid.) Mr. Reagan’s words represent the concerns of many other believers like him, but in it all, he with many other believers are troubled as God is seemingly remaining silent about it all, not clearly squelching the godlessness we face today.

(2) Even religious liberty is being countered by various government agencies without God’s stopping it: If one “believes the Bill of Rights is still functionally the law of the land,” then “religious freedom still” exists “in the United States . . . But according to the actual law – that is, will of elite bureaucrats – faith is incompatible with higher American values” on “things like abortion and child ‘gender transitions’ . . . Many Americans understand that, regardless of whom they vote for, their entrenched institutions are perpetually working to undermine their values . . . that, regardless of what the Constitution says, bureaucratic dictates increasingly take precedence over enshrined rights.” (“The assault on American Catholicism,” Ibid., August 19, 2023, p. 8A)

(3) It occurs at the local level: (a) A believer who was recently facing a big trial asked me if he might have done something wrong to deserve what he faced. His case left me recalling the trials I have had in life when God seemed to stay silent so that I ended up just “muddling through” them! (b) Another believer recently told me that he does not understand God’s purposes in some of trials he has faced, but that he has decided that it is worthless to try to figure them all out, but simply to trudge along in life being thankful for what positives God brings his way!

Need: *So, we ask, “How does God want us to handle trials in life when He seems to remain silent about them?!”*

I. Psalm 77:1-2 reports how the psalmist was crying out in a sleepless night to God for help from trouble!

II. Complicating the situation, the psalmist added in Psalm 77:3-9 that God was seemingly silent:

- A. The psalmist’s concerns were so great and God’s absence of interaction with him seemingly so distant that he actually blamed God for keeping him awake with his concerns, Psalm 77:3-4!
- B. While lying awake, the psalmist recalled God’s past provisions of help, but in view of the Lord’s current silence, he wondered if God had finally rejected him in anger, never to show him mercy again, Psalm 77:5-9!

III. In this troubling state of mind, the psalmist recalled a time when Israel faced a similar trial, v. 10-21:

- A. The psalmist decided to “entreat the favor” (*halah*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1042; The Analyt. Heb. and Chald. Lex., 1972 (Zon.), 1972, p. 259; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 318) of God by appealing figuratively to “the years of the right hand of the Most High” (v. 10 KJV), that is, to appeal to the time when God with His right hand of might performed great miracles of deliverance, Psalm 77:10, 11-14 ESV, NIV.
- B. Specifically, the psalmist recalled God’s mighty miracles of delivering Israel at the Red Sea, Psalm 77:15-20:
 - 1. When God delivered Israel at the Red Sea, the sea figuratively writhed in convulsion as God parted the sea and dried up the seabed for Israel to flee from Pharaoh’s chariot army, Psalm 77:15-16; Exodus 14:1-31.
 - 2. Apparently, there was also a great thunderstorm at this event that demonstrated God’s huge power in the thunder, wind, lightening and the quaking of the earth, Psalm 77:17-18.

3. Though God's footprints were not seen because He is an invisible Spirit, God's pathway through the Red Sea became obvious to the people of Israel so that they could safely cross to the other shore, Psalm 77:19.
4. Thus, the Lord led His people Israel like a flock of sheep by the hand of Moses and Aaron, Psalm 77:20.

IV. The wisdom of appealing to THIS PARTICULAR EVENT is seen in its FITTING APPLICATION:

- A. The Exodus occurred when the people of Israel had been under burdensome Egyptian bondage for "many days" (Exodus 2:23a) and when they had cried out for help (Exodus 2:23b).
- B. We know from Exodus 1:13-14 that Israel had been under Egyptian bondage since before the birth of Moses, and that Acts 7:23, 30 reveals that Moses was 80 years old before God used him to lead Israel out of bondage. Thus, Israel's arduous bondage had occurred for **at least 80 years, and probably much longer!**
- C. Thus, when Israel's human hope was exhausted, Exodus 2:23-25 records how God recalled His covenant with Israel's forefathers where in Genesis 15:13-16 He had promised to deliver Israel from Egypt after 400 years!
- D. Accordingly, the psalmist relevantly recalled God's faithfulness to His own covenant as the basis for hoping that God would deliver him in time even when his own trust in God was exhausted!

Lesson: *If facing great trials where a believer's faith in God has been exhausted, the Lord directs that this believer recall the Biblical precedents where God came to His people's rescue when their hope was similarly exhausted!*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) If we face trials that are far too great or prolonged for us even to trust God to handle, may we heed the lesson of Psalm 77:1-20 and appeal to the precedent of God's faithfulness to Himself when the faith and hope of His people of Israel was exhausted!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and provide additional guidance . . .)

In addition to applying the lesson of Psalm 77:1-20, we have Biblical guidance on adjusting our thinking and actions in better handling or even avoiding a number of stressful trials that we face (as follows):

(1) In Psalm 131:1, David testified that he had learned to stop being proud and arrogant in assuming that he could handle all situations he faced when they were actually too difficult for him. He admitted in Psalm 131:2 that he had learned to calm and quiet his soul like a weaned child beside his mother. A weaned child has learned to wait for his mother to provide him edible food, no longer crying out in demand to be nursed. Thus, David communicated that he had learned to wait on the Lord and trust Him to meet his needs instead of launching out on his own to solve his problems. We thus do well to calm and quiet our souls when overwhelming trials arise and wait upon the Lord.

(2) In Mark 1:17, Jesus told His disciples to **follow** Him, and He would **make** them to **become** fishers of men. Some trials we believers face are intensified since (i) we try to handle them in our own understanding only to fail as we are not actually **following** God's leading. Proverbs 3:5-6 ESV, NIV calls us not to rely on our own understanding but to acknowledge the Lord's interests in all that we do, that He will then make our path in life straight so that we can make progress. (ii) Also, we must wait on God to **develop** us to be **able** to succeed in what He wants us to do, for He "makes" us to "become" what He wants us to be and do, what many times involves **time** and **practice**.

(3) On the concerns that fellow believer Michael Reagan expressed and the challenge to religious liberty even from government agencies, (a) we have often noted that God is allowing a "mini-Great Tribulation" occur in our era with leaders who are full of intrigue and who oppress their subjects (Revelation 3:21 with 7:17), and that our response should be to (i) heed the Scripture's "balm" to the pain produced by this era's evils and teach this "balm" to other afflicted people (as follows): (+) We counter the mainstream media's deception by relying on Scripture (2 Timothy 3:13-17) and the Holy Spirit's discerning ministry (1 Corinthians 2:6-15) for the truth; (+) We overcome financial corruption of officials and the harms they cause by working for income as independently as we can (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12) and by trusting God's supply for a living (Hebrews 13:5-6); (+) We handle the immigration problem by resting in God's sovereign rule of national boundaries (Acts 17:26) and following His lead in disciplining all who come our way (Acts 17:27-30; 1:8); and (+) we rely on God's sovereignty to keep problems fueled by leaders (crippling of oil & gas production; the botched Afghanistan withdrawal; Covid mismanagement; political weaponization of the Justice Department; false terrorist charges of religious folk; lawlessness; homelessness; drug abuse; election manipulations, and challenge to religious liberty by various government agencies) enough in check so that we believers can abound in every good word and work until the rapture of the true Church (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17)!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. To deal with overwhelming trials, may we draw hope from God's Biblical precedents where He came to His people's rescue even when their resources were exhausted.