

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
LXXVIII. God's Call To Heed His Chosen Leaders
(Psalm 78:1-72)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

The need for godly leaders and for people to heed them abounds today:

(1) Recently, “a Colorado woman . . . was found dead along with her sister and teenage son at a remote Rocky Mountain campsite” having “likely died of malnutrition and hypothermia, according to the autopsies.” (“Three found dead at remote Rocky Mountain campsite tried to escape society, stepsister says,” Republican-American, September 2, 2023, p. 6A) According to a relative, “They felt that the pandemic and politics brought out the worst in humanity . . . ‘that with everything changing . . . (and) this world is going to end . . . (they) wanted to be away from people and the influences of what people can do to each other.’” (Ibid.)

“The 14-year-old boy’s body was found with Jara’s . . . rosary that she gave the group before they left” (Ibid.), so these people were religious, believing God approved of their effort to live apart from society. Thus, a lack of Biblical insight from godly leaders on how to live in today’s world led them to die cold and hungry in the mountains.

(2) Life today bothers many other religious people, and many lack helpful spiritual insight from godly leaders: (a) The “Traditional Latin Mass” is being revived in some Catholic churches, and “Miami Archbishop Thomas Wenski” said that it’s the “‘appeal to tradition’” that is driving it, for “‘(t)oday, we’re living in a time of rapid change . . . that . . . can be a bit disconcerting or disorienting . . . so tradition seems like a way to anchor oneself.’” (Lauren Costantino, “Latin Mass finds favor among young in Miami,” Ibid., September 1, 2023, p. 3B) Accordingly, people are attending services where they do not know what is being said to seek stability just from tradition. (b) Many evangelicals are affected, too: according to one of our deacons who contacted Grace Theological Seminary and Dallas Theological Seminary last month, these seminaries are reporting “an explosion in search requests for pastors.”

(4) It occurs in society: (a) “The Hartford-area . . . (NAACP) . . . has noted rising crime in the city,” and to explain, “Hartford state Sen. John Fonfara . . . implicitly referred to what is usually unmentionable in Connecticut: child neglect at home engendered by the welfare system and social promotion in school,” effects of leftist ideology. (b) It occurs in the academic realm: “Climate alarmists love to cite a statistic that 97% of climate scientists adopt the narrative that human interventions in the environment are spurring us along to the end of the world. Yet that 97% claim is patently false. It traces back to a study led by John Cook titled, ‘Quantifying the consensus on anthropogenic global warming in the scientific literature’” that “analyzed all published peer-reviewed academic research papers from 1991 to 2011 that used the terms ‘global warming’ or ‘global climate change’ . . . Yet the study completely discounted the vast majority of the papers it analyzed (66.4%) . . . Only by excluding these papers did the authors come up with a 97% figure,” and “(m)any of the scientists who wrote the original papers Cook’s team analyzed complained that this study mischaracterized their research.” (Tyler O’Neill, managing editor of The Daily Signal, “Climate alarmists ignore science of Maui’s fires,” Ibid.) (c) Misinformation marks the federal government: “John Hinderaker in powerlineblog.com” wrote, “‘(I)n my opinion . . . you can’t trust any information that comes out of the federal government . . . including that which seems to be the most objective and in former times, non-controversial. Everything is being gamed.’” (“Errors, or disinformation?” Ibid., September 4, 2023, p. 8A)

Need: *So, we ask, “What does God want us to do about the lack of godly leaders and the failure to heed them?!”*

- I. Psalm 78:1-72 was written by Asaph to address the highly sensitive subject of Israel’s need to heed king David’s leadership instead of rejecting it in favor of remaining loyal to Saul’s past ungodly leadership:**
- A. This psalm is a big “parable” (*mashal*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 605), “an illustration by comparison” (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftns. to Psalm 78:2 and Ezekiel 17:2) that is presented with “riddles, perplexing sayings” (*hidah*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 295; Ibid., Ryrie), Psalm 78:1-2.
 - B. Jesus in Matthew 13:10-17 explained that such figures of speech were used by God to hide His edifying truths from the ungodly while communicating God’s truths to the upright for their edification.
 - C. In order for us to discern why Asaph composed Psalm 78 as a parable with riddles, we note in the psalm’s climax in verses 68-72 that he praised God’s use of David to shepherd the nation Israel. Asaph thus meant gently to prod the godly mature believers in Israel to accept David as king after the death of godless Saul at a time when Saul’s and David’s peoples were in civil war against each other during the era when David ruled Judah but he was not yet ruling all of the nation of Israel, 2 Samuel 2:1-4; 3:1.

- D. At this time, Asaph did not openly critique Saul's past rule lest he anger spiritually immature people in Saul's camp and boost more unrest, so Asaph formed Psalm 78 as a parable gently to prod the godly to accept David.
- II. Thus, we “decode” the “parable” that is Psalm 78 with its “riddles” to discern its message (as follows):**
- A. Asaph mentioned “the men of Ephraim” who were notoriously rebellious against God and God's leaders:
1. The “parable” starts in Psalm 78:8-10 where the psalmist refers to the stubborn, rebellious men of Israel's past, figuratively calling them “men of Ephraim” (v. 9 NIV), and then referring to Israel's history of repeat rebellions against God and His leaders in Moses, Aaron, and the judges after them, Psalm 78:11-66.
 2. The term “men of Ephraim” is thus a **figurative** term fitting for *all* of Israel's rebellious people in *history*:
 - a. The **actual** men of Ephraim sinfully failed to clear the pagans from their land, Ex. 23:23-25; Jud. 1:29.
 - b. When the **actual** men of Ephraim complained that they did not have enough space allotted to them, Joshua rebuked them, telling them to remove the pagans from their land for the room they needed, Jos. 17:14-18.
 - c. Ephraim's **actual** men later expressed anger at Gideon whom God called to rescue Israel because he had not initially called them to help him defeat the Midianites, so Gideon soothed their hurt egos, Judges 8:1-3.
 - d. When Ephraim's **actual** men criticized Jephthah for his allegedly not asking for their help to defeat the Ammonites, Jephthah replied that they had refused him, so he slew 42,000 of Ephraim's men, Jud. 12:1-6.
- B. The Psalmist thus presented Israel's people in Psalm 78:11-66 dating from the Exodus to David as perpetually failing to obey God and follow His chosen leaders *much like* the repeat sins of the **actual** men of Ephraim.
- C. Saul had been the **worst** rebel against God and His anointed man David since Saul had repeatedly tried to kill David (1 Samuel 18:7-27:1), so Asaph in David's era, by use of a parable full of riddles in Psalm 78:1-72, carefully urged the godly in Israel to shift their loyalty from Saul to David who had already been proved to be God's good shepherd for Israel, Psalm 78:67-72. Israel later actually did what Asaph urged in 2 Samuel 5:1-3.

Lesson: *By way of cloaked speech in using a big parable with riddles, Asaph gently urged Israel's godly people not to rebel against the Lord and His chosen leader David as had their forefathers from the Exodus to Saul, but to accept God's selection of the divinely anointed and now proven ruler in David and support his reign as king.*

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) May we obey God and heed His chosen leaders for blessing.*

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

To heed God's chosen leaders, we need to discern the marks of credible leadership, what Scripture provides in view of the issues of concern mentioned in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) As for the case of the three people who tried to live apart from today's society only to die hungry and cold in the mountains, (a) Philippians 2:14-16a ESV calls us to be blameless and innocent in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation as we firmly hold to Scripture. God does not call us to withdraw from society, but to live righteously in it by relying on Him and His Word for guidance. (b) Thus, the spiritual leadership we need to heed in today's world draws its insight on living from Scripture (Deuteronomy 17:18-20) and its power from personal reliance on the Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13 with 2 Timothy 1:6-7 and Galatians 5:16, 22-23).

(2) As for the Latin Mass, 1 Corinthians 14:15-19 teaches that one is spiritually edified in a worship service only if he understands in his mind what is said from the pulpit. Most Americans do not know Latin, so a Latin Mass cannot spiritually edify them, and we must expose ourselves to services that give edifying Biblical facts to our minds.

(3) As for many evangelicals who are seeking pastors, God in Jeremiah 3:15 promised to give His people pastors after His own heart who would feed them with knowledge and understanding, but Mark 4:24-25 adds that God gives people more insight and hence good pastors based on how well they heed what He has already given them. We need to apply what we already know of God's truth if we would expect God to supply us with more of it!

(4) As for the issue of child neglect due to welfare and social promotion practices of the left, Scripture calls us to work for our livelihoods (2 Thessalonians 3:10) instead of relying on government welfare that spawns so much damage to family life, and to be diligent to excel in life (Proverbs 10:4; 12:24) instead of being promoted in life without actually achieving anything. Nothing can substitute for work and self-discipline to achieve.

(5) As for dishonesty in climate alarmist scientists and in government leaders, Proverbs 12:17 ESV claims, “Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit.” If we discern that any formerly reputable entity has deceived us, we must view it as a false witness and no longer rely on its assertions to us!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we obey God in heeding His chosen leaders for blessing.