

Part 7 – Steadfast in His Covenant

In part 6 we learned what happened to the Israelites when they believed not in God nor trusted in His salvation: He ended up killing off all those who were faithless, lustful and ungrateful, *despite* seeing *many* miracles He did *for them*. And, in the last study, the Psalmist used one specific account to make this point: even after Israel had been given manna (which we learned is actually angels' food) to eat *continually*, they got tired of it and lusted after the quail He gave them a year prior. And they even questioned His ability to provide it for them *again*. Therefore, while He gave them the quail, God smote the faithless, lustful and ungrateful people dead with a *great* plague, even while the flesh was *still between their teeth* (they didn't even get to finish enjoying their meal). Thus, the 'moral of the story' of this account (in Divine history) is that we should be grateful for what we have *and* not lust. And we should also learn to endure hard times, for they *will* come; *and* we'll be far better off after learning to endure them *and* our faith will be stronger afterwards too. But, our faith *cannot* be like grass that's shaken by the wind, **if** we want to be pleasing to God and receive His promises. True faith is believing in God's Word *no matter what* happens to us *and* striving to obey Him (from the heart) *no matter how* hard times get. But, true faith is what the Israelites of old (who came out of Egypt) were lacking, and that's why they are such a good example (of what we should not be like) for us living today (1 Cor 10:11). And that's why the Psalmist of this great 78th 'Maschil' Psalm will continue to use them as an example for teaching us the 'parables' and 'dark sayings' (vs 2) that are 'hidden' in divine history (God's Word) ...

Psalm 78

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

So, even though the Israelites in the wilderness (who had been *freed* from cruel bondage in Egypt) were shown many miracles (and were well taken care of in the wilderness), and even though God continued to punish them for their sins, they still continued to sin and lacked faith in His wondrous works. The word '**sinned**' here means *to miss*; hence (figuratively and generally) *to sin*; by inference, *to forfeit, lack, expiate, repent*, (causatively) *lead astray, condemn* (#2398). And the word '**believed**' means, figuratively, *to render* (or be) *firm* or *faithful*, *to trust* or *believe*, *to be permanent* or *quiet*; morally *to be true* or *certain* (#539). And the words '**wondrous works**' means *to distinguish* (literally or figuratively); by implication, *to be* (causatively, *make*) *great, difficult, wonderful* (#6381). While we all 'miss the mark' of perfection (Rom 3:23), these Israelite's lack of faith (not believing in the *true* God) caused them to continue to sin (be rebellious, ungrateful and lustful) despite their *literally* seeing so many miracles *and* the punishments for sinning. So, most of them were not merely 'occasional sinners' who were trying to do what's right. Many of them were rebellious hearted and the many wondrous works didn't change them, sadly. Though the Lord (YHWH) continued to distinguish

Himself as the Supreme (Almighty) God (who is our Creator) over heaven and earth – by continuing to show them miracles – they still sinned and didn't believe those amazing miracles!

This, again, proves that 'seeing' is not 'believing'. Many unbelievers state that if they could just see God then they would believe in Him. Or, if they could just see a miracle they would believe in Him. But the history of the Israelites who came out of Egypt (who saw many miracles) proves this is not true. If people are not really seeking truth, then 'seeing' miracles won't make them believe. After all, many people saw God in the flesh (Jesus Christ, John 1:1,14, Heb 1:3, Col 1:15) and didn't believe in Him because they were not seeking the truth. They were seeking pleasure and glory instead. As Paul wrote in Heb 4:2, speaking of the generation of Israelites who came out Egyptian bondage: *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* The Gospel (truth) must be 'mixed' (combined, #4786) with faith (moral conviction, #4102) in order to profit us, because **people simply will not act upon something that they don't believe in**. For example, why do you go to work every day? Because you believe you'll get paid, right? Yes, of course! But, if you did not get paid... how long would you continue to work for that company? Likely not very long unless you got paid soon. But people continue to serve sin (which is truly serving Satan) even though the 'pay' from it is not good! As Rom 6:23, *the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Yet, many people simply can't 'add up' the fact that sinning doesn't pay well. And they are deceived into thinking obeying God doesn't pay well (which is certainly does) simply because God's blessings don't always (or usually) come quickly. They are thus, *so shortsighted* that they cannot see how their sins are truly dragging them down (Rom 6:21) and they don't have the foresight to understand, or believe, that obeying God *really does* pay very well. As Rom 6:22 says, *but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.* And, while most blessings from God take time, the most immediate fruit that comes from a good repentance is the blessed peace of mind (Ps 16:11, Isa 26:3, Phil 4:7). But the wicked (willful sinners) *never* have any inward peace (Isa 48:22, Isa 57:21) ...

Psalms 78

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

Because of their lack of faith (still speaking of the generation of Israelites who came out of Egyptian bondage), God saw to it that their 'days' (life) were shortened and their 'years were in trouble' because He continued to punish them for their sins (rightly so). They didn't get to live long lives because of their continued rebelliousness that stemmed from their lack of faith in Him and lust to sin. Long life is only promised to those who obey Him (Prov 3:21, Ps 92:1, Rom 6:23). Num 14:26-35 documents that God eventually sentenced the generation of those Israelites who came out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. In verse 29 He said: *Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty*

years old and upward, which have murmured against me. That means, there was not any military man who was 20 years or older (when they came out of Egypt) who entered the Promise Land. And not even Moses or Aaron did, because of the incident at Meribah (Num 20:7-13). The only two exceptions were Joshua and Caleb (vs 30) because they were not rebellious hearted – i.e. they were the only two spies (out of twelve) that did not bring an evil report upon the Promise Land (Num 14:37-38) when they went to search it out. The *Companion Bible* has a note on the words ‘in vanity’ here that says this means ‘in a breath’ – i.e. the whole generation of men quickly died out (Num 14:29,35, 26:64-65).

Psalm 78

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God.

35 And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

Sadly, it took many people dying for that generation of Israelites to finally come around to repenting. As we’ve already learned, God smote the people who complained about being tired of the manna with a plague, while they were still eating the quail (Num 11:33-34); and He also smote the complainers with fire (Num 11:1-3). He also smote ten of the spies who searched out the Promise Land because they brought up an evil report about it (Num 14:35-45) which caused the rest of Israel to disbelieve God’s promise that He would bring them into the Promise Land... which caused them to also be condemned to die in the wilderness (Num 14:22-30,35). But there was also the rebellion of Korah (Num 16) where Korah and his family (who foolishly did not separate themselves from him when they had the chance) were literally swallowed up by the earth. And God also smote the other men who rebelled with Korah, with fire (vs 35). But then (astoundingly), the next day *all* the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron, claiming *they* killed the ‘people of the Lord’... even though the death of Korah and the other rebels were *miraculous* events! God was so fed up with them at that point, He was ready to kill them all off (again) but, thanks to the intercession of Moses and Aaron, the plague (that had begun to kill them off) ceased (Num 16:41-50). But 14,700 of them died before that! Num 25:1-13 also tells us of another time God smote the rebels, when they committed fornication with the daughters of Moab who caused them to worship false gods. And then, there was another time when they again chided with Moses; and it shows what these 34-35th verses in Ps 78 is referring to when it says that after God slew them, they sought Him and enquired after God and remembered He was their rock...

4 And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.

5 And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.

6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

7 Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people.

8 And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

9 And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.

Num 21:4-9

So, there were times the people actually repented in ‘enquired’ after ‘God’ (**‘El** (#410), which means the *Almighty* God who is *Omnipotent*; it shows His strength, power and might) and remembered that ‘God’ (**‘Elohiym** #430, which means *the Supreme God*, who is our *Creator*) was their ‘Rock’ (Deut 32:4, 1 Cor 10:4) *because* He’s the only one we can truly trust in, for He alone is the ‘high God’ (the *Supreme God*, #5945, #410) who is our redeemer (#1350). After all, He redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage by plaguing Egypt until they let Israel go free (Ex 15:13, Deut 7:8, etc.). Paul also gives a good summary of Israel’s many sins in 1 Cor 10:5-12 and reminds us that they are our examples (vs 11) of what we should **not** be like if we want to be pleasing to God. But sadly, Israel’s repentance was *never* lasting...

Psalms 78

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

These verses explain *why* their repentance was not lasting. The word ‘**flatter**’ means, figuratively, **to be** (or **make**) **simple** (as in stupid or seducible) or (*in a sinister way*) **to delude** (#6601) and has also been translated as allure, deceive, enlarge, entice, flatter, persuade and silly. And the word ‘**lie**’ not only means **to lie** but also **to deceive** (#3576). The word ‘**right**’ means **to be erect** (i.e. stand perpendicular); hence (causatively) **to set up**, in a great variety of applications, whether literal (**establish**, *fix, prepare, apply*), or figurative (*appoint, render sure, proper or prosperous*) (#3559). It’s also been translated as faithfulness, firm, fixed, perfect and stablish (among other things). And the word ‘**steadfast**’ means, figuratively, **to render** (or **be**) **firm** or **faithful**, **to trust** or **believe**, to be **permanent** or **quiet**; morally to be **true** or **certain** (#539).

So, in other words, their repentance was not *wholehearted*. Just like so many people today (Ecc 1:9) they sought God when ‘times were hard’ but their heart was not sincere. They simply wanted *relief* from their hard times. In the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, they didn’t want to die, as they so often saw many others doing. It is easy to feel sorry when hard times

come but true repentance *requires* a change of heart (desires, emotions, intentions, motivations) that is real *and* sincere. In other words, you *must* change your inner and outer man when you repent or *your repentance is not sincere*. And truly, there's no fooling God. You can try to do so when you repent half-heartedly – i.e. you 'repent' only for the moment when you are in trouble – but ***the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever*** (1 Chron 28:9). So, there are no secret sins with God. You simply cannot fool Him. He knows what you are truly thinking, feeling, planning and what motivates you. As Moses wrote in Ps 90:8, all our iniquities and secret sins are an 'open book' to our Heavenly Father. And Eccl 12:14 points out that *God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*. Jesus confirmed this when He said that *there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad* (Mark 4:22).

So, the reason they lied to Him is that, while their mouth spewed out words of repentance, their heart was not *really* (deep down) sorry (repentant). Again, they simply wanted *relief* from whatever chastisement God had given them at the time (or whatever their trouble was). But, as David pointed out in Ps 32 [https://t.me/BibleStudyBooks_Psalms/352], it takes putting truth in our 'inward parts' (heart and mind) to truly bring forth a sincere repentance. This not only means saying 'sorry Lord' but *truly* being sorry for your sins, insomuch that you *work hard* to **change them**. And that change must come from your heart. As Prov 16:6 says, only by mercy and truth is 'iniquity' (a perverse/evil heart #5771) purged (cleansed). That's what Jesus taught too, in Mth 15 and Mk 7, when He said that, what truly defiles us is not washing our hands in some ceremonial way (nor any other ritual). True defilement stems from the heart...

17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable.

18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him;

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Mark 7:17-23

The religious men of Jesus' day taught the people that they had to perform certain (man-made) rituals if they wanted to please God. But, Jesus pointed out that the root of the problem is not

outwardly defiling our physical body. That is simply a ‘symptom’ of the true root cause, which is *what goes on in our heart*. And He gave a list of 13 sins that ‘come from within’ and defile us, spiritually. And **that’s** what causes us to also defile our flesh body. Now, you can change your outward actions but still be quite dirty inside. That’s what the fake religionists (of all ages) do, *and also* what the children of Israel in the wilderness did. They *outwardly* repented but *nothing changed in their heart*. And that’s simply not pleasing to God! As He so profoundly said through the prophet Isaiah...

*Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, **but have removed their heart far from me**, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*

Isa 29:13

When we look to some man (or woman) to teach us what’s acceptable to God – instead of studying His Word sincerely (2 Tim 2:15) - then we’re not *really sincerely* seeking God. And thus, our repentance won’t be sincere either. Because, you’ve got to *change* what goes on in your heart (desires, emotions, intentions and motivations) and mind (thoughts) in order to be pleasing. Once you change your heart and mind (‘inner man’) then your outward actions will naturally ‘follow suit’. But trying to change *only* your outward actions, and not your ‘inner man’ (heart and mind) will produce a fake repentance **that is not lasting**. As Paul so well teaches us: we must put off our ‘old man’ *which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts* (Eph 2:22), and *not serve sin any longer* (Rom 6:6). We do this by *renewing in the spirit of our mind* (Eph 4:23) through studying God’s Word (Col 3:10) so the Holy Spirit will help us put on the ‘new man’, which is *created in righteousness and true holiness* (Eph 4:24). So, our heart and mind (thoughts and desires) **must truly** align with God’s Word. As 1 Peter 4:1-2 so aptly explains it: *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but **to the will of God**.*

Truly being pleasing to God is not doubting Him, disobeying Him or lusting. It is having faith in Him and sincerely obeying (serving) Him (from the heart) for the rest of our life. But this requires we know who He is (John 17:3) and what He really wants (John 4:23-24). Otherwise, our ‘repentance’ is as fake as it was for the Israelites in the wilderness. And, God can see through that (fakeness/insincerity) in an instant! So, if you still *desire* to sin, then you have not truly come around to a good repentance. While you’ll still be *tempted* to sin after you’ve sincerely repented, you’ll strive *hard* to kill that desire (lust) within you so you don’t ‘fulfill the lust of the flesh’ (Gal 5:16). And, when God sees you striving hard to ‘crucify’ your ‘lusts and affections’ (Gal 5:24) then He will send His Holy Spirit into your heart *to help you resist* (reject and not obey) those lusts that pull at you (Rom 8:26-34). But, if you *willingly* entertain lusts, greed, anger (any ‘works of the flesh, Gal 5:19-21) then *you cut yourself off from God* [John 15 -

<https://t.me/BibleStudyTruth/1273>]. As James 4:4 reminds us: *whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God*. And if you are God's enemy, you'll never have peace of mind nor be allowed to obtain eternal life. Pain, misery and, ultimately, death is the only result of being alienated from God and His Son, Jesus Christ. But, *this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent* (John 17:3). So, while the 'food from heaven' (manna) that the children of Israel received (by God's grace) while they were in the wilderness did not give them eternal life; in fact, it did not even give them long lives! And that's because they did not receive the true 'manna' from heaven (John 6:48-58), which is God's Word, i.e. the truth. As Jesus also said: *It is the spirit that quickeneth* [Heb 4:12]; *the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life* (John 6:63)... it is thus the Word of God – absorbed into our heart and mind – that gives us eternal life. And that's why it's so critical to study God's Word up each and every day. The truly do strengthen (and cleanse) our inner man (heart and mind) more so than good food does for our flesh body.

So, let's really soak up (spiritually) these vital lessons that the rebellious Israelites gave us, which this great Psalm 78 reveals to us (vs 2) and 'take heed' lest we be fooled into apostasy, *unwittingly* (1 Cor 10:12, 2 Thess 2). For, as the epistles of John so well reminds us...

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

1 John 2:15-17

We'll pick this up in part 8...

AMEN.