

To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth. <sup>2</sup> I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, <sup>3</sup> which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. <sup>4</sup> We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. <sup>5</sup> For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; <sup>6</sup> that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, <sup>7</sup> that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. <sup>8</sup> And may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Text: Psalm 78:1-8    A 1/8/17    Romans 10:8-18    John 6:28-40    Psalm 145 (Resp. Ps.: 86)  
Hymns: 296, 629, 416, 477

### REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD AND HIS WORD

Speak, O Lord, Thy servant heareth,  
To Thy Word I now give heed;  
Life and spirit Thy Word beareth,  
All Thy Word is true indeed.  
Death's dread power in me is rife;  
Jesus, may Thy Word of Life  
Fill my soul with love's strong fervor  
That I cling to Thee forever. (TLH #296:1)

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Our text is the beginning verses of a Psalm written by the Holy Spirit through a man named Asaph, who lived at the same time as King David. One commentator states: "In his psalms, Asaph often uses the history of God's mighty acts to give God's people hope in desperate times. In this Psalm he uses history to demonstrate the patience and faithfulness of God and to warn God's people not to rebel against the Lord as their forefathers did" (Sermon Studies On Selected Psalms, p. 199, © 2002 NPH). This is certainly the case in our text.

God says, "Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth." The time just before this was written was the period of the judges (see the book of Judges). During that time, when God sent His people a deliverer, they were helped and blessed. But when that deliverer died, the people once again forgot about God. Now the Lord had sent them David, a king who loved the Lord and led the people in His ways. The time when our text was written was a good time, spiritually, for God's people. But most of the time throughout the Old Testament the majority of the Jews turned away from God and ended up losing eternal salvation. God wanted His people in David's time and afterwards to listen to what He was telling them, learn from the sad example of so many of their forefathers, and not end up like them.

Our heavenly Father recorded these words of our text in the Bible because He wants you and me to hear it and take it to heart, too. God in His grace has given us *“the one thing needed”* (Lk 10:42) – forgiveness for all of our sins and eternal life in His Son, Jesus. Our heavenly Father doesn’t want you and me to follow the example of people who threw away their treasure in Jesus, and are eternally lost. God wants us to keep our treasure forever.

Asaph says, *“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, <sup>3</sup> which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.”* God directed His people’s attention to His **Word**. He refers to *“parables,”* that is, “stories with a meaning,” and *“dark sayings,”* or “hidden things,” or “riddles.” In the verses after our text we see that these *“parables”* weren’t stories, like Jesus’ parables, but references to the actual history of God’s Old Testament people in Egypt, traveling through the wilderness, and in the Promised Land. The word *“parables”* in the original text refers to messages that require careful study and comparison with the hearers’ own situation before they are understood properly and applied correctly (A Commentary On Psalms 73-150, p. 48, John F. Brug, © 2004 NPH). The only way God’s people could understand these *“dark sayings,”* these “hidden things,” these “riddles” was with the help of the Holy Spirit. God wanted His people to ask Him to help them think about the unbelieving ways of most of their Jewish ancestors, to compare their ancestors’ ways to their own ways, and to learn from it.

God’s expressed hope for His people and their future generations was that they *“not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.”* Our text is from Psalm 78. In verse twenty-two we’re told about the majority of the Jews traveling through the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land, *“They did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.”* Most of them were unbelievers! Hebrews 3:19 says that most of the Jews traveling to the Promised Land *“could not enter in because of unbelief.”* That’s why God warned His people of David’s time, and why He’s warning you and me now, to learn from their example. Referring to this very thing Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:11-12, *“Now all these things ... were written for our admonition.... Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”* God cried out to His Old Testament people, *“‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?’”* (Ezek. 33:11). God loves us. He made us His believing people. He never wants us to turn away from Him, let go of our eternal salvation, and end up in hell. God wants to keep us always as His believing, saved people, and take us to heaven one day.

With the palmist we ask God, *“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law”* – Your Word (Ps. 119:18). The Apostle Peter himself said that some things in the Bible are hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16). We all need to keep growing in what we know and understand about God’s Word. Jesus says, *“It is the Spirit who gives life.... The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”* (Jn. 6:63). Carefully hear and study God’s Word, knowing that the Holy Spirit is enabling us to understand it and believe it and live according to it, and knowing that it is through His Word that God gives us eternal life!

We’re told, *“[God] established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them*

*to their children, that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.*” Not only does God want His people to remain faithful to Him and His Word, He wants us to teach our children to do the same. John Brug says, “Christian education must begin with adults devoting themselves to God’s Word, filling themselves up with it, thinking deeply about it, keeping it in the center of their lives. When their hearts and minds are filled up by the Word, they will be ready to pour out its treasures to the next generation” (A Commentary On Psalms 73-150, p. 50, John F. Brug, © 2004 NPH). The greatest ‘legacy’ we leave to our children is faith – faith in God and His Word, and lives that reflect that faith.

*“We will ... [tell] to the generation to come the praises of the LORD.”* “LORD” here in the original is “*Jehovah*,” whom one commentator describes in this way: “He is the God of free and faithful grace. His love is independent and unchanging. The history of God’s people reveals that it is only because of God’s independent and unchanging love that He still claimed the Israelites as His people. Actions prompted by His love are indeed ‘praiseworthy’” (Sermon Studies On Selected Psalms, p. 200, © 2002 NPH.). Through God’s Word we can teach our children to know and love the living God who loves them and sent His Son, Jesus, to be their Savior.

We are to tell our children of “*[God’s] strength and His wonderful works that He has done.*” The phrase “*wonderful works*” is often used in Scripture to describe God’s miracles – things that only God can do. Again the commentator says, “...[ours] is a faith based on history. ...the historical ‘wonders’ of the exodus and ... the New Testament ‘wonders’ of Jesus’ death and resurrection.... Only the true God can do such wonders” (Sermon Studies On Selected Psalms, p. 201, © 2002 NPH.). With complete confidence we can teach our children to trust what the Bible says – its geography, its history, all of its accounts of God’s miracles, its account of Jesus’ death on the cross and bodily resurrection for our eternal salvation, and everything else the Bible says – as the literal truth from God!

“Lord, help us and our children and all the generations after them to remain faithful to You and Your Word, and bring us all to heaven.”

Lord, Thy words are waters living  
Where I quench my thirsty need;  
Lord, Thy words are bread life-giving,  
On Thy words my soul doth feed.  
Lord, Thy words shall be my light  
Through death’s vale and dreary night;  
Yea, they are my sword prevailing  
And my cup of joy unfailing.

Precious Jesus, I beseech Thee,  
May Thy words take root in me;  
May this gift from heaven enrich me  
So that I bear fruit for Thee!  
Take them never from my heart  
Till I see Thee as Thou art,  
When in heavenly bliss and glory  
I shall greet Thee and adore Thee. Amen. (TLH #296:3-4)