

Generation to Generation

Psalm 78:1-8

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Historical Context: Psalm 78 continues the tradition of passing down the record of God's marvelous works of old from one generation to the next. Psalmist Asaph implored his generation to keep the Law, not forget God's work, and rebel. They should not repeat their ancestors' rebellion in the wilderness, when the Lord's anger struck them down, nor follow the later generation that caused Shiloh to be plundered before the Lord chose David. The poem is a sad recounting of how their ancestors forgot God's works, but it also recounts how the Lord graciously delivered them.

Message Statement: Pass down God's legacy, not your own

I. The Generation that Hears (vs. 1-3)

A. The People are to Listen and Incline

1. **Listen** – (imperative) hear, take heed to something; perceive by the ear.
2. **Instruction** – direction, law, decision, or rule; the content of what is being taught.
3. **Incline** – stretch, spread, lengthen, bend down; turn aside or entice
 - a. to concentrate, pay attention, listen attentively, to bend or turn (one's ear) towards a speaker in order to listen well.
4. **Parable** - A short moral story with a symbolic meaning
 - a. Saying which uses one realm of life to illuminate another.
 - b. All of these were oral traditions.
 - c. The same word Christ used (Matthew 13).

5. **Dark Sayings** – riddles; ambiguous sayings; lesson taught indirectly.
6. **Commentary** - The knowledge to be conveyed is ancient, “riddles” handed down from previous generations that apparently must be understood if Israel is to continue as the people of God. The “riddle,” of course, is not immediately accessible. It is not even explicitly stated, but apparently its solution lies in telling the “story” to those yet to come, a “story” of Yahweh’s wonderful deeds and Israel’s failures.

B. The people have heard and known.

1. **Known** – notice, realize; become known.
2. The people have known God’s Word.
3. The people have known God’s Actions.
4. Their father’s (past generation) told them of the parables and dark sayings.

II. **The Generation that Teaches** (vs. 4-5)

A. The People are to teach.

1. **Conceal** – hide, make disappear, hold.
2. Their Children.
 - a. The psalmist is not intending on skipping a generation but rather is emphasizing how much they plan to share so much that the generation that follows will know. (It’s Intentional)
3. What the next generation is to learn from you:
 - a. **Praises of the Lord**

1) **Praises** – glory, praiseworthy actions, songs of praise

i. Qualities or deeds.

b. **God's Strength**

1) **Strength** – God's might and power.

c. **Wonderful Works** – miraculous acts; things done that are not usual (Joshua 4:21-24).

d. **Commentary** - Israel has been able to know Yahweh in two ways. One way is through His words, the law that He established for her. Even before the law, however, was the divine action: Exodus preceded covenant. Both are necessary for an understanding of Yahweh and the way to live in a relationship with Him.

4. What God has Done

a. **Established a Testimony in Jacob**

1) **Established** – come to fruition; endured; belong to; fixed.

2) **Testimony** – witness

b. **Appointed a Law in Israel**

1) **Appointed** – lay, arranged, installed, confirmed

c. **He commanded the fathers (previous generation) to teach the children.**

1) The psalmist is taking the people back to the Exodus where God:

- i. Brought the 10 plagues of Egypt
- ii. Parted the Red Sea, allowing them to live, and their enemies were killed (Exodus 14:13-31).
- iii. Established His law with them at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20.)
- iv. Commanded them to teach their children (Deut. 6:4-9, 20-21).

III. The Generation that Learns (Next Generation) – (vs. 6-8)

A. What they will Learn

- 1. **Know** - notice, realize; become known; experience.
 - a. Not only them but their children as well.
- 2. **Put their confidence (faith, hope) in God.**
 - a. Come to have their own personal trust.
- 3. **Not forget (cast out of one's mind) God Works.**
 - a. They have informed and humble thinking.
- 4. **Keep His Commandments.**
 - a. **Keep** – watch over, protect; preserve.
 - b. An obedient will.

B. What they will not Repeat

- 1. **A stubborn and rebellious generation.**
- 2. **A generation that did not prepare its Heart.**
 - a. **Heart** - one's inner self.
 - 1) to have a disposition.

2) Your Will.

3. **Whose spirit was not faithful to God.**

- a. **Faithful** – prove to be firm; permanent; believe.
- b. Once again, the psalmist took them back to the Exodus but this time, he reminded them of the unfaithful generation that did not go into the promised land because of their disobedience (Deut. 1:31-35).

1) In their rebellion, they tried to conquer the land on their own and failed (Deut. 1:41-46).

- c. The Lord planned this so that the nation might trust Him and obey the Law (v. 7), not stumbling in unbelief and rebellion like their unfaithful forefathers.
- d. Only by understanding the old traditions can the present generation avoid repeating the sins of the previous ones.