

When God's people keep on sinning

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[0 : 00] Welcome, and again, bring greetings from Christchurch and Hayworth Heath, and again, we're very grateful for the prayer system that we have, so we do keep tabs on what you're about and trust you know a little bit about ourselves.

So as Chris has said, we're looking at Psalm 78 this morning. It's on page 589 of the Church Bibles. It's quite a long psalm, so as Chris said, we're going to split it into two readings.

In broad terms, the psalm can split into three parts, so when you've got the text in the Bible in front of you, you see it's just one string. So trying to break it down a little bit at the beginning, we have an introduction from verses 1 through to 8, and that's like an introduction that almost summarises the main message of the psalm.

So those of you into technical reports, it's a bit like the executive summary, so verses 1 to 8 is the essence of the psalm, as well as an introduction.

And then, effectively, what the psalm is doing, he's reviewing about 300 years of Jewish history. That's what he's doing. It's almost like a historic review of the psalmist looking back over some of the history of his people.

[1 : 13] And he does this twice, so he starts in verse 9, and he does the review down to verse 39, looking back over a sweep of history.

And then from verse 40 through to verse 72, he repeats the process again, looking at a slightly different angle on history. So it rolls through twice. And the key words to look out for is that on both of those sections, it's all to do with remembrance and forgetfulness.

This is what the whole psalm is about, and we'll pursue that a little bit more in a moment. So a couple of key words you want to catch on this is that the key word on this first sort of look at history is verse 11, where it says they forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.

And that's a key for that first section down to verse 38. And then in verse 42 is the key word for the second section, which says they did not remember.

So that's the way it works. So there's quite a lot there, but hopefully that will come clearer as we go through later on. So I'll read the first 39 verses, and then we'll break and then sing our next song, and then we'll read the next section.

[2 : 29] So let's read. Oh, my people, hear my teaching. Listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter hidden things from of old.

What we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children. We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power and the wonders he has done.

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children. So the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born.

And they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commandments. They would not be like their forefathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him. The men of Ephraim, though armed with bows, turned back on the day of battle. They did not keep God's covenant and refused to live by his law. They forgot what he had done, the wonders he had shown them.

[3 : 43] He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zohan. He divided the sea and let them through. He made the water stand like a firm wall.

He guided them with a cloud by day and with a light from the fire all night. He split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas. He brought streams out of a rocky crag and

made water flow down like rivers.

But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High. They willfully put God to the test by demanding food they craved. They spoke against God, saying, Can God spread a table in the desert?

When he struck the rock, water gushed out and streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people? When the Lord heard them, he was very angry.

His fire broke out against Jacob and his wrath rose up against Israel. For they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance. Yet he gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens.

[4 : 53] He rained down manna for the people to eat. He gave them the grain of heaven. Men ate the bread of angels. He sent them all the food they could eat. He let loose the east wind from the heavens and led forth the south wind by his power.

He rained meat down on them like dust, flying birds like sand on the seashore. He made them come down inside their camp, all around their tents.

They ate till they had more than enough, for he had given them what they had craved. But before they turned from the food they craved, even while it was still in their mouths, God's anger rose against them.

He put to death the sturdiest among them, cutting down the young men of Israel. In spite of all this, they kept on sinning. In spite of his wonders, they did not believe.

So he ended their days in futility and their years in terror. Whenever God slew them, they would seek him, and they eagerly turned to him again.

[5 : 54] They remembered that God was their rock, that God Most High was their Redeemer. But then they would flatter him with their mouths, lying to him with their tongues. And their hearts were not loyal to him.

They were not faithful to his covenant. Yet he was merciful. He forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath.

He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return. Amen. Let's turn back to your Bibles.

We'll read the second part of that psalm. So we're on page, I guess, 590 now. So we're reading now from verse 40 through to the end.

So again, so effectively it's another sweep back through the same broad period of history, but taking a slightly different angle. So from verse 40. How often they rebelled against him in the desert and grieved him in the wasteland.

[7 : 04] Again and again they put God to the test. They vexed the Holy One of Israel. They did not remember his power the day he redeemed them from their oppressor.

The day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan. He turned their rivers to blood. They could not drink from their streams. He sent swarms of flies that devoured them and frogs that devastated them.

He gave their crops to the grasshopper, their produce to the locust. He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore figs with sleet. He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning.

He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility, a band of destroying angels. He prepared a path for his anger.

He did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague. He struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham. But he brought his people out like a flock.

[8 : 09] He led them like sheep through the desert. He guided them safely so they were unafraid. But the sea engulfed their enemies. Thus he brought them to the border of his holy land, to the hill country his right hand had taken.

He drove out nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance. He settled the tribes of Israel in their homes. But they put God to the test and rebelled against the Most High.

They did not keep his statutes. Like their fathers, they were disloyal and faithless, as unreliable as a faulty bow. They angered him with their high places.

They aroused his jealousy with their idols. When God heard them, he was very angry. He rejected Israel completely. He abandoned the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent he had set up among men.

He sent the ark of his might into captivity, his splendor into the hands of the enemy. He gave his people over to the sword. He was very angry with his inheritance.

[9 : 15] Fire consumed their young men, and their maidens had no wedding songs. Their priests were put to the sword, and their widows could not weep. Then the Lord awoke, as from sleep, as a man awakes from the stupor of wine.

He beat back his enemies. He put them to the everlasting shame. Then he rejected the tents of Joseph. He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim. But he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved.

He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth that he established forever. He chose David his servant, and took him from the sheep pens. From tending the sheep, he brought him to be the shepherd of his people, Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance.

And David shepherded them with integrity of heart. With skillful hands, he led them. Well, before we come to that, let's ask for God's help, and just see what we can learn from that, and what will help each one of us in our walk with him.

So let's pray. Father, we thank you that we do come to your word. Your word is ever relevant, even though this was written many years ago, thousands of years ago.

[10 : 28] And yet, Father, it is relevant today, as the newspapers we might open, the news we might hear on the radio or the television. And we pray, Father, that you would help each one of us to hear what you have to say, to commit it to heart, that, Father, we may be better to serve you, to follow you.

We may be encouraged to know you. And we just ask for your help now, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, in some ways, this psalm is a bit like a final year project at university.

I guess most of you will know, I think it still happens, it happened in my day, that often your final year at uni, you have to do a project where you study something in real depth, and you produce this masterful piece of work.

I guess some of you did this. I suspect some of you know people have done it. And if it's not been your experience, then don't worry about it. But this is very much like that.

This is like a topic that he was given, the psalmist was given, to go and look at a particular issue and study it through history.

[11 : 35] So it's a bit like a history degree. It's a bit like the final year essay that he's done for a history degree. And the question that he sets out to answer is a very simple question. How does remembering, or indeed forgetting God's deeds, affect our trust and obedience in him?

So how does our remembering, or indeed our forgetting, what God has done in the past, how does that affect the way that we trust him and the way that we obey him?

And he comes to this conclusion. It's a very simple conclusion, and it's all you really need to remember, actually, that remembering God's deeds leads to trust and obedience.

Forgetting God's deeds leads to unfaithfulness and disobedience. And it's almost as simple as that. That's almost the main part of what this psalm is teaching.

As we remember what God has done, so that will help us, lead us to trust and obey him. As we forget, so that will invariably lead to unfaithfulness, not trusting him, and leading to disobedience.

[12 : 40] So how does he do it? How does he come to that conclusion? So this is his work that he's done. He effectively does this by looking at around about 300 years of Jewish history.

And I hope you recognize some of that as we went through the reading. So he starts with Moses bringing his people out of Egypt. And you remember the stories about the plagues and so on.

And then he picks up on their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. And then we have the entry in the promised land. And then we have that period of the judges, where the nation was ruled by judges.

And of course, at the end of that, they were demanding that they had a king. So we then have the first king of Israel, King Saul. He's here in that history.

And then he completes his review of history with King David. And we saw that right at the end of the psalm. So when did he write this psalm? There's various views, but he probably wrote this psalm toward the end of Solomon's reign.

[13 : 43] So Solomon was David's son. So he just moved a little bit on. So he was able to reflect from the position of Solomon's reign back to over that 300 years of history. And what he's trying to get across here is that what he was seeing at that time, if you remember, towards the end of

Solomon's reign, he started to go off the rails.

Remember this? He started to worship other gods. He was beginning to forget God's faith, God's deeds, beginning to forget God's word. And so the psalmist could see that they're on a path of danger.

They're on a path as a nation to move away from trusting God. And of course, that's exactly what happened. So it's really, it was a way of writing into that situation and warning that nation, do not forget the deeds of God as you forget God, so that will lead into paths of disobedience.

So he's really trying to remind the people of the importance of keeping alive the memory of God's deeds. So it's not just the remembering, it's keeping that alive, keeping that vital in your own mind, keeping it in the forefront of your mind, without simple conclusion that as we keep that in the forefront of our minds, that will encourage us to trust and obey.

But forgetting takes us the other way. Now, how he does this is very clever. This is why it's a very powerful, it's a masterful piece of work, which we'll look at right at the end. He does this by looking at four areas of God's deeds.

[15:14] He looks at his acts of salvation through that period. He looks at his acts of provision, providing for their needs. He then looks at his acts of judgment when they sin.

And he then looks at acts of grace, even when they're under judgment. So he looks under those four heads. And that's what we'll look at in a moment. But before we do that, I just want to sort of build up a little bit more of the understanding of how this psalm works and something with its structure.

So we'll go back to structure again. So back to what we said at the beginning, the psalm in overall terms is in three parts. So you have verses 1 to 8, which is your introduction, and then verses 9 to 39 looks at the same four aspects of God's deeds, but under the heading of forgetfulness in verse 11.

And then he repeats again that sweep of history, again looking at those same four aspects of God's deeds, but this time under the heading of failing to remember in verse 42.

And then he's put right at the beginning his big sort of conclusion, which says in verse 7. And verse 7 reads, then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands.

[16:34] So that's his big sort of main conclusion. This is his thesis, and this is the big answer. What does the then refer to? What is the then they would put their trust?

The then is, refers to knowing God's deeds. Not forgetting, but knowing God's deeds. And they are summarised for us in verse 4. So he describes these deeds as the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

So in remembering those things, then they would put their trust in God and would not forget to keep his commands. That's his, the big sort of thesis, that's his big argument he's presenting to his readers.

So that's the main point, but there's also some other lessons that come into this, into the same introduction. The first one we see is quite a, it's almost, it's blindingly obvious, but can actually be lost.

We cannot remember, none of us in this room can remember something if we haven't been taught it in the first place. Okay? I think that's pretty, I guess you all agree. We can't remember something unless we've been first being taught.

[17:43] And so he stresses in verses 4 to 6 the importance of teaching our children, teaching the next generation. This is a major responsibility for all of us, all of us who are believers.

And what applied then applies to us now. So whether we're parents or grandparents, whether we're children's leaders, youth leaders, whatever, we must, we must tell our children and our young people about these great deeds.

And if we don't, then they will have no basis for remembering and applying that in their own lives.

And we need to be teaching them the great deeds of God in creation, in salvation, in human affairs.

There's a whole range of stuff. I was sharing with some at the beginning, and I went to an Answers in Genesis conference yesterday at Tunbridge, which deals largely in areas of creation.

And the amount of stuff out there is enormous, absolutely phenomenal amount when you go into the whole area of science and history and in archaeology. There's stacks of stuff that we can be teaching our children, but the first source of teaching must be the Bible, and that must be our first

and the foundational area for teaching our children.

[19:00] But we have a lot more. We have church history, we have people's testimonies and biographies, we have our own personal experience, we heard some this morning, we have books and books of stuff.

There is no excuse for any of us not to be teaching the next generation. There is so much material available. And that's what we need to tap into and to use.

The second thing he brings out very powerfully in this was that we must know God's word alongside his deeds.

That's exactly, I don't know whether you picked up on that, that's exactly what the first song was this morning, was all about, and Chris alluded to it in the opening of the meeting, that we have to read God's word alongside God's deeds.

So as one person puts it, God has presented to us his book of words, which is the Bible, and his book of works, which is the creation around us. And we have to read those two together.

[20:00] If we neglect to read God's word, then we will struggle to understand God's works. And that's why in the beginning of this psalm, he says, I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter the hidden things, things from of old.

So we do need God's word to properly understand and interpret his deeds, otherwise we can easily go off track. And so that's what he's saying in verse 5.

He says he's talking about the statutes and the law that he's given, and they have to be read alongside his deeds. And I think a classic is actually in this particular psalm.

If we take you down, if you look down at verse 55, this is where God is taking his people into the promised land. Okay, verse 55.

And it says here, he drove out the nations before them and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance. He settled the tribes of Israel in their homes. Now, that has come under a lot of criticism from the outside world because at the surface level, it actually looks very cruel.

[21:09] It's a sense in which this nation simply displaced this other nation. They were just shoved out. It was, I suppose, it was almost like a form of ethnic cleansing.

So it was, so some would say, this is very cruel. How can God, as a loving God, displace all these people so that he can let his own people in? And so you could look at that and that could, on surface, seem hard to answer.

But of course, it's not like that. If you, you need to look it up now, but if you're interested in pursuing this, go to Deuteronomy chapter 9 and verses 1 to 6. And there you have the theological explanation of what was going on.

God wasn't simply displacing these people for his own convenience. These people were under God's judgment. The people who lived in the land before the Israelites got there had failed to follow God.

They had rejected his ways. Their way of living was totally offensive to God. And he had suffered this for centuries. And this was their judgment. That was their due judgment for their considered and their willful disobedience of God.

[22:16] So it wasn't simply a case of them just bullying people. This isn't a basis for nations to simply displace other nations. This was God's judgment on those people that was in his purposes to make space for his own people.

So it's so important that we read God's word alongside God's deeds. And the other point that's useful to bring out from the way the psalm is structured is back to this whole point that he actually says the same thing twice.

So I hope you're getting the hang of this. So he basically goes through the sweep of history twice. Now why does he do that? Now I don't know how many of you listen to current affair programs and all that sort of stuff and news and so on.

Have you ever come across a situation where a new report comes out, usually about one a week now I think, on health or education or welfare. And so a new report comes out and they bring in two experts.

Okay? And they're both reading the same report, they both have the same evidence, and they have diametrically opposite views. Do you ever come across that? And you think, what's that about? What's that about? You know, at that point you think, well they're experts and how can I unravel that?

[23 : 29] And what he's doing here in a sense, he's saying, look, any way which way that you look at the history of the Jews, it comes to the same conclusion. So in other words, he's looking at the evidence and he's saying, whichever way you look at it, you go through these two approaches, it has that reinforcing effect that whichever way you want to unpack it, it has the same lesson.

That's what you're trying to get across. It's not just his opinion, it's the weight of evidence. And the other thing he does here, which again is very helpful, which we've touched on already, is that in verse 11 he speaks about forgetting and in verse 42 he talks about not remembering. Now you think, what's that about? You know, that's a bit odd. But again, it's the same principle, he's reinforcing the same point. Because we all know the subtlety of our own hearts, we really do. I hope all of you are ahead of me on this.

We are very good at deliberately allowing things to be forgotten. We all do that because it's part of our survival in a way. Certain things we find hard, we will naturally be able to forget.

Or we fail to commit something to memory. In other words, you learn something but you say, I'm not going to try to remember that and I'll walk out of this place because I'm going to leave it here. And we do that all the time.

[24 : 48] All of us do that all the time. We're very good at either letting go of information or deliberately deciding we're not going to hold on to information. And he's really getting us at both points and saying, watch both of that.

Don't let go of what you do know and don't deliberately try to forget what you could be learning. So he's sort of making a very powerful and very deep understanding of how the human brain, the human psyche sort of works.

Right then, so we'll look at these four areas now that he deals with. Again, if you have your Bibles in front of you, what you should have had, what I should have given you is handouts because you can then mark this up.

But you can't be marking up the church Bibles because I don't think the leaders would like that. But anyway, first of all, the whole area of God's acts of salvation. Now he does this in verses 12 through to 14.

If you can sort of put your finger by that. And then he picks it up again in verses 43 through to 53. Okay, so this is back to this duality all the time.

[25 : 56] And what he's dealing with in those two passages is the plagues in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the guiding of the people with the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire.

The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. And if any of this is all a bit strange to you, then have a chat with somebody afterwards because this is all embedded in the early books of the Bible.

This is all good history. It's all exciting history. And that's what he's referring to. Now, take yourself to those events, these plagues, crossing of the Red Sea, this massive pillar of cloud, pillar of fire. These are amazing and spectacular events. This is God's complete command over nature. These are just, I mean, these are just enormous spectaculars.

These would just wow even the dullest of people. And he's doing this, not just to put on a display of his might and power, he's doing it in both cases to rescue his people from their enemies.

[26 : 56] That's what's going on here. And what the psalmist is implying doesn't actually say as many words. He's saying, with these in the front of your mind, seeing this, it is not hard to trust God.

You get it? How can you not trust God who's doing that? Okay? That's what he's sort of saying. That's the implication. With such a display of power, to use a modern phrase, it's a no-brainer. Why would you want to go anywhere else? Why would you trust anyone? Why would you not trust this person? And that's really what he's trying to convey here. It's just getting, picking up the big wow factor of that.

And of course, for us today, of course, we don't look back just at these events. Our salvation is not looking back at the cross in the Red Sea. Our salvation, of course, is looking at Jesus on the cross. That is where we look to. And this is what we need to remember. As we remember, and again, we've thought about it quite a lot already today, as we remember that event, as we picture in our minds the Lord Jesus dying for each one of us, that will shape our decisions.

[28 : 04] That will shape our choices. It will lead us in the ways of trust and obedience. That is where we sit now in great salvation history. We look back to that big event and it's that big event that we need to keep in the forefront of our minds, which, of course, God knows how forgetful we

are, which is why we have regular communion.

I think probably you all understand that. But there's one illustration on this which is quite powerful and it's always struck me when we've read it. And that is at the trial of Jesus.

Remember the trial of Jesus where Peter denied knowing Jesus. Remember how that is a very hard passage to read. And at the point where he was denying Jesus, he had, in a sense, lost sight of Jesus.

He was failing to remember Jesus. So when he was asked, do you belong to Jesus? No, no, no, I don't. He was conveniently forgetting who Jesus was, forgetting his relationship with Jesus.

And again, you need to look it up now but if you want to look more carefully, it's in Luke chapter 22 and verses 60 to 62 and you have this very poignant moment where Jesus looked at Peter in that scene and Peter then remembered Jesus.

[29 : 17] He then had that sight of Jesus. He realised his dreadful mistake and we read that he went outside and wept bitterly. You see, when he did see Jesus, when he remembered Jesus, he had that sight of Jesus, he knew how he should live and he realised what a failure he had become.

But God, Jesus did restore him. So he failed to remember Jesus through, and that led to denial and lack of trust rather than trusting.

So when we forget God's acts of salvation, it's so much easier for us not to trust him. Let's put it the other way around. So when we forget these things, when we put them out of our mind, it's much easier for us not to trust him and not to obey him.

So that's his acts of salvation. Then we have his acts of provision. Okay, so back to your Bibles if you can and again, two other passages. So first of all, we have this in verses 15 and 16 and then in verses 54 and 55.

So here, we then have two areas of God's provision for his people. The first one is the provision of water when they're in the desert and the second one which we looked at is the provision of a land for them to live in.

[30 : 35] Now, think about this. I don't know how many there were, but I think there was probably, including women, children, there was, I don't know, was it a couple of million of them? I'm not certain. It was of that order, I think, in a desert.

And what was it I heard yesterday at the conference? The Sinai Desert is 23,000 miles of nothingness. No, 23,000 square miles of nothingness, okay?

That's what they described Sinai. So they're in a desert within 23,000 miles of nothingness and there's over a couple of million of them and God provides water. That is, this is humanly impossible. When they occupied the land, that wasn't occupied by a weak nation. The nations that occupied the promised land were all powerful nations. You know, that was why they bottled out originally to, when the spies went in, they were big people, they were strong people.

They weren't an easy pushover, to put it that way. So in both of these situations, God is providing for them in a situation that is really humanly almost impossible. And so he's making the same point again, that as long as we keep that in mind, then it can't be hard to trust God in that situation.

[31 : 48] Why would you not trust a God who can provide? If he can provide in that situation, then he can provide in our situation. But what the psalmist is also doing here, he's, because it's a similar point to the one about salvation, but he's taking a slightly different angle because again, he knows how our minds work.

You see, when we think about God's mighty deeds and salvation, that's good, that's the big stuff. And that relates so much to, you know, our biggest needs to be saved. But then you think, well hang around.

But is God really interested in, you know, what I eat each day? Is he really interested in my day-to-day means? All that routine, mundane stuff. Is he interested in that?

He might be interested in my salvation, but is he actually interested in what food I have on the table this lunchtime? And the answer is yes. That's the point he's making here, that the psalmist is making it quite clear that God is able to meet us in those daily needs of just the food and the shirt on our back and the roof over our head.

He's just as equally able to meet us in that point, so we should equally trust him in that area as well. We should be trusting him in the day-to-day things, in the details of life, as well as the big things of life.

[33 : 02] That's the part of the message. The psalmist wants to get across. So, we've had his acts of salvation, his acts of provision. Now we come to the darker area, the acts of judgment, his acts of judgment.

And we see that in two sections, which are actually the longest parts of this psalm, which is from verse 17 through to 33, and then verses 56 through to 64.

And again, what he's doing, he's going back to two parts of their early history. First of all, he's going back to Numbers chapter 11. So if you want to check all this out, you can go back there and read this up.

So what was happening in Numbers chapter 11, that's the first section, that is where the people were complaining about having the manna, this manna from heaven, and they wanted meat. We want meat. That's what he said, we want meat. So God gave them meat, and did he give them meat? He sent to them, I don't know how many billions of quail that he diverted from their annual, whatever, migrations, and dumped them all in and around their camp.

[34 : 08] And it was several feet deep, and it was an amazing number, absolutely amazing number. And he sent that meat, but at the same time he sent a plague because of their rebellion, because of their lack of trust.

And out of that, many died. So that's a potted version of Numbers 11. And then we have the next section in verses 56 to 64 is dealing, make sure I've got this right, yeah, is dealing with, if you go back to 1 Samuel chapter 4, you'll find out where all that's going on.

And this is again where the Israelites, as always, were again being unfaithful to God, and because of that, God allowed the Philistines to have a major victory over them, and most critically, to take away the Ark of the Covenant, to take away what was, in a sense, God's presence, and that was a very dark time for them.

So we see, in both of those, that through them failing to remember God, they found themselves in those paths of unfaithfulness and rebellion, and in that, that it led to judgment.

So again, there is us also, not an area we're always comfortable with, there's also a need for us not just to remember God's good deeds, but also to remember that God does judge. And that is there also to help us to trust and obey.

[35 : 31] Now this is, this is not such a comfortable area, you know, think about a God that might judge us because we disobey him, but we can, got good support for that. If we go to Hebrews chapter 12, and again you could look this up later on, there is a whole area where it speaks of God disciplining his children to encourage us on those paths of obedience.

And it says there that God's discipline can be something that is unpleasant and painful. That's what it tells us in Hebrews 12, and he's reminding us of that, to remember that, to remember God's judgment, to encourage us to be those that trust and obey.

But there's also a lot of light in Hebrews 12 because what also it says in that same passage, it's that passage that speaks of fixing our eyes on Jesus, that we may walk in obedience.

And what the writer of the Hebrews is almost saying there, if you read that passage again, perhaps this evening, he's almost saying it's better to fix our eyes on Jesus and walk in obedience than to lose sight of Jesus and to be disciplined.

It's almost what he said. It's the same idea of fixing our eyes, having that remembrance of God's deeds, including his judgment, that it may encourage us to trust. And then lastly, we have God's acts of grace, which is found in verses 34 through to 39, and then through verses 65 to 72.

[36 : 59] The first one, I think, is one which I trust will be familiar to many of you. It's the whole period of the judges. Don't we love the judges? So here we have this cycle, if you remember, of them being unfaithful to God.

God brings them into judgment. They repent. They are restored. And then they go back the cycle again of being unfaithful, judgment, repentance, and restoration.

That just goes on and on and on. And what does God say of that? Look at verse 38. This is a big verse. Yet he was merciful. He forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them.

So time and time again he showed them mercy. He is a merciful God. He is a gracious God. He doesn't abandon us because we get it wrong. He persisted with his people after this cycle of rebellion after rebellion.

He came back time and time again in mercy and grace. And then the other passage he refers to, 65 through to 72, is a bit harder to get a handle on.

[38 : 03] But what it's all about is all about King Saul and his unfaithfulness as the first king of Israel. And this is quite a big deal because the people wanted a king and the first king, King Saul, basically got it wrong.

he became unfaithful to God. And what we see in verse 67, it speaks of this rejecting, rejection of the tribe, the tents of Joseph.

He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim. And what there is, there's a link between the tribe of Ephraim and the area of Ephraim and King Saul. And it's all there, so it was a bit buried in there, but it is there.

So what he's saying here, okay, you as a nation, he's talking to Israel, you wanted a monarchy, you wanted kings. Your first king is unfaithful to me, okay, and he could have, in a sense, written off the whole experiment, but he doesn't.

What does God do when Saul is consistently unfaithful and is ultimately rejected by God? What does God do? He raises up another king, King David, who, as we read in verse 72, is a man who displays integrity of heart.

[39 : 15] So again, it's the same principle. God is showing mercy. He doesn't give up on that monarchy, but he provides a new king that shows, has a heart after God's own heart.

So he is showing that God is a God of grace even when his people fail. And there's one little magic verse tucked in there which sits right in the middle of the psalm, right in the middle of the psalm, and it's actually something which we should totally rejoice in, and that's verse 39.

This is particularly referring to the way they kept disobeying. He remembered that they were but flesh, a passing breeze that does not return.

Can you see what he's doing? He's saying, God remembers us. He doesn't forget us. He remembers that we are but flesh.

And yet we forget, so he remembers, he does not forget our weakness, hence his mercy towards us. But boy, do we so quickly forget his greatness. Do you see that sort of combination, that sort of, the two ideas stuck together, that he remembers us.

[40 : 31] He doesn't forget us, but we so quickly forget him. And therefore, we should be ever grateful for God's good memory. We may despair over our poor memories, but we should see God's great memory.

Psalmist wants to see, however much we fail, God's grace does not fail. No situation is ever too bad for us to turn back to God. Even at our lowest point, even when we've completely blown it, this is to encourage us to return to trust and obedience.

That's what he's saying here. So, in conclusion, we have these four aspects of God's deeds. So, we've looked at his acts in salvation, in provision, in judgment, and in grace, those great acts of God.

And what he's done, this psalm, this is why he's a master piece of work, is he's actually given us a complete sort of answer. It's like the complete solution.

It's the ultimate answer to everything in a way. Because see how it works. See how it works. We all will face lots of situations. I can guarantee that all of us this coming week will face one of these following situations in some shape or form.

[41 : 48] So, in life, we will be faced with big issues, big decisions that we feel are way out there. And when we are faced with that, then we need to remember God's mighty acts of salvation.

Think of those big acts he's done. Think of what he did on the cross. Our big issues are small by comparison. So, in those big issues of life, we can trust God because of his great acts of salvation, what we see there.

When it comes to the daily routine of life, you know, just that basic, say, almost the grind of life, but perhaps that's a bit negative, but you know what I mean. The basic routine of life. We can remember his acts of salvation.

He did provide his people with water, just plain old water, in the desert. That's what God does, and that should be encouragement for us to trust him in those times. We will, all of us, in some shape or form this week, will face temptation.

There's no question. And we do need to remember his acts of judgment. When we do sin, it's not a small thing. And we have that provision, we have that forgiveness, but we also know that God can discipline us, and we need to remember that God does judge.

[42 : 53] So when we're tempted, remember, remember his acts of judgment. And if this week, at some point, we feel we've completely blown it, that's it, I'm leaving, you know, job over, remember that if we face those times of sense of failure, remember his acts of grace.

Think of the repeated times of God's people sinning and sinning, and yet he comes back time and time again. And we need to remember that, that God's amazing acts of grace.

So, back to our psalmist. So I reckon that if he went to the University of Jerusalem, which perhaps he did, and this was his final year of dissertation, then I would give it a first class honors degree. I reckon. I hope you agree with that. It's a masterful piece of work. But of course, this morning, we're not here. This has nothing to do with getting qualifications. This is not why we gather this morning as a people.

Our purpose in gathering is to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what we're here for. We are to be those people who, against all our own struggles and all the things that go on around us, are to be those that walk in trust and obedience.

[44 : 03] And what actually God wants of us, it's not that we have honors degrees, but what he wants is first class followers. That's what he's looking for. He wants from each one of us to be a first class follower.

And what this psalm is teaching us, that a very good place to start, is to remember at all times and in all situations, God's praiseworthy, powerful, and wonderful deeds.

And we will sing about that in our closing song.