

SAVING THE NEXT GENERATION

PSALM 78:5-8

Introduction:

What about the next generation? Will they simply repeat the folly of this generation, or will they even abandon the good of this generation? Or will they break the cycle of rebellion against God and avoid the shame of moral and spiritual failure?

The Psalmist wrote this lengthy song to raise the hope of saving the next generation. He believed that it is possible for parents and grandparents to make a difference if they are willing to properly teach the next generation. The psalm keeps looking backward to a tragic past in hope that the younger generation will learn the lessons that are rather obvious. In the midst of the tragic past God has displayed his mercy, goodness, and faithfulness so clearly that surely if the next generation can see it, it will be saved from the folly of sin. It will not vex God in the same way that our generation has vexed God.

The Psalmist gives a clear statement about the goal of parental instruction and influence. In the three simple statements he points to the secret of saving the next generation. If these three things can be developed in the next generation, then they will truly be preserved from the ruin and pain that the prior generations have known. We need to understand them so that we can move our children and grandchildren toward them.

I. CULTIVATE A PROPER USE OF MEMORY.

“And not forget the works of God.”

1. An improper use of memory focuses on the works of man.

It may focus on the good works of man and build a life of pride and self-sufficiency that does not need God.

It may focus on the bad works of man and burden the life with crippling guilt and doubt about the worth of self.

2. A healthy use of memory focuses on the works of God.

There is a healthy memory of what God has done in history. God was at work in the world before you arrived on the scene. What was He doing before you got here? Where do you fit into what God was doing then and is doing now?

A healthy memory does not forget the many ways God has demonstrated His goodness toward us.

If we are to save the next generation, we must be able to personally use our memory in a healthy way, and to teach our children and grandchildren how to do this both by example and precept.

II. PLACE ALL OF YOUR HOPE IN THE LIVING GOD.

“That they may set their hope in God.”

1. A healthy use of memory encourages placing all our hope in God.
2. What God had revealed of Himself in the past confirms Him to be the only truly trustworthy One.

The Psalmist could point back only to the Exodus and the events that surrounded the settlement of the people of Israel into the land of promise. We can point our children and grandchildren to the greater works of God—works greater than the Creation and the Exodus. We can point them to the Incarnation of God in the human flesh. We can point them to the demonstration of divine love at the Cross in the offering of the Son for our sins. We can point to the manifestation of the power of God in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

If the next generation is to be saved, it must place all of its hope in the God who has so wondrously revealed himself in history. Healthy use of memory should generate a life of hope and trust.

III. PRACTICE A LIFE OF GRATEFUL OBEDIENCE TO THE LORD.

“But keep his commandments.”

1. Realization that they are “His” commandments encourages a life of obedience.

“Telling the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” (v. 4)

2. Remembering the consequences of disobedience encourages a life of obedience.

“For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their carved images. When God heard this, He was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel. So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among them, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy’s hand.” (v. 58-61) This little piece of history from the days of Samuel should be warning enough!

3. Reflecting on the mercies of the Lord motivates a life of obedience.

“But He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them. Yea, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up his wrath; for he remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again..”

There is no hope for the next generation if they do not learn to obey the Lord.