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Midnight Anguish: “Though His Footprints are Not Seen”

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Psalm 77 For the director of music. For Jeduthun. Of **Asaph**. A psalm.²

¹I cried out to God for help; I cried out to God to hear me. ²When I was in distress, I sought the Lord; at night I stretched out untiring hands, and I would not be comforted. ³I remembered You, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint. [Selah] ⁴You kept my eyes from closing; I was too troubled to speak. ⁵I thought about the former days, the years of long ago; ⁶I remembered my songs in the night.

My heart meditated and my spirit asked: ⁷“Will the Lord reject forever? Will He never show His favour again? ⁸Has His unfailing love vanished forever? Has His promise failed for all time? ⁹Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has He in anger withheld His compassion?” [Selah]

¹⁰Then I thought, “To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out His right hand. ¹¹I will remember the deeds of the LORD; YES, I will remember Your miracles of long ago. ¹²I will consider all Your works and meditate on all Your mighty deeds.” ¹³Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God? ¹⁴You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your power among the peoples. ¹⁵With Your mighty arm You redeemed Your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. [Selah] ¹⁶The waters saw You, God, the waters saw You and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. ¹⁷The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; Your arrows flashed back and forth. ¹⁸Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, Your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked. ¹⁹Your path led through the sea, Your way through the mighty waters, though Your footprints were not seen. ²⁰You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

1. The Vincent Van Gogh Story (1853-1890): Tortured Life of Dutch Missionary-Artist

¹ Vincent Van Gogh’s Starry Night, 1888.

² Sometimes referred to as Asaph’s Psalm of Habakkuk (See Habakkuk 1 and 3)

2. Night Anguish: Our False Internal Narratives (lies we believe)

“Sing once again with me our strange duet, my power over you grows stronger yet . . . in this labyrinth, where night is blind, the Phantom of the Opera is there - inside your mind. Let your mind start the journey through a strange, new world! Leave all thoughts of the world you knew before! Let your soul take you where you long to be! Only then can you belong to me . . . floating, falling, sweet intoxication! Touch me, trust me, savour each sensation! Let the dream begin, let your darker side give into the power of the music that I write - the power of the music of the night” (from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Phantom of the Opera).

3. The Horror of Despair and Perceived Abandonment (http://www.ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/dark_night.i.html)

4. Honest to God Dialogue: Irony and Struggle

“The irony of faith is that it is not quiet submission to the fates. It asks, and it shouts; it is a cry that is heard in heaven. Faith does not affect pious language, nor does it presume that honest struggle will be smashed in a fit of divine pique. The irony of questioning God is that it honours Him: it turns our hearts away from ungodly despair toward a passionate desire to comprehend Him.” . . . [It is the] “paradox of His presence in the midst of His absence . . . we will find Him after we have given up making Him in our own image. Despair exposes our emptiness and the futility of our idol-making” (Allender & Longman, 1994, pp. 150 & 160). Romans 8:28 “And we know . . .”

5. Human Tendency to Forget: The Turning Point Produced by God-ward Memory

6. Earthly versus Heavenly Hope: Inevitable Disappointment vs Redemptive Transformation

7. Annie Johnson Flint Story (1866-1932): Blessed Life of an Afflicted, Beloved American Poet

He Giveth More Grace: He gives more grace when the burdens grow greater, He sends more strength when the labours increase; to added affliction He adds His mercy; to multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. When we have exhausted our store of endurance, when our strength has failed ere the day is half done, when we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving is only begun. Fear not that your need shall exceed His provision, our God ever yearns His resources to share; lean hard on the arm everlasting, availing; the Father, both you and your load, will upbear. His love has no limit; His grace has no measure. His pow'r has no boundary known unto men; for out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again! (2 Corinthians 12:9) ***The Making of the Beautiful*** (<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/christia/flintbio.pdf>)

8. Invitation from Our Loving God:

- a. Choose today to move **from lament** (deep waters) **to hymn** (high places)
- b. Choose today to **let** the “forever faithful **God** of history” anchor your faith:
Know in whose presence you pray: **Adoration Confession Thanksgiving Supplication**
- c. Today, **trust** in the Lord Jesus Christ who is your **Good Shepherd** (John 10:11-15) and look, too, for His provision of human accompaniment.

9. The Essence of Message: Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ’s unchanging (James 1:17) and profound care (1 Peter 5:7) - His steadfast love (Hebrews 13:5b-8; Psalm 86) - even when you can’t understand His movements in history or His silence in your own life.