

Psalm 78: Building Beyond Our Timeline

By the time we finish reading all of **Psalm 78** out loud, you'll feel its weight. It is long, honest, and not flattering to the people of God. But we're going to stand at the doorway of the psalm, verses 1-4, and let those opening lines set the agenda for two things:

1. Our church's focus next year on building a legacy for future generations
2. Our 2026 seminar series through the Baptist Catechism

My aim is simple: that we would walk out resolved, as a congregation, to say with the psalmist, *"We will not hide"* what God has made known.

Psalm 78

TELL THE COMING GENERATION

A Maskil of Asaph

- [1] *Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!*
- [2] *I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,*
- [3] *things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.*
- [4] *We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.*
- [5] *He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children,*
- [6] *that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,*
- [7] *so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments;*
- [8] *and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.*
- [9] *The Ephraimites, armed with the bow, turned back on the day of battle.*
- [10] *They did not keep God's covenant, but refused to walk according to his law.*
- [11] *They forgot his works and the wonders that he had shown them.*
- [12] *In the sight of their fathers he performed wonders in the land of Egypt, in the fields of Zoan.*
- [13] *He divided the sea and let them pass through it, and made the waters stand like a heap.*
- [14] *In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a fiery light.*
- [15] *He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep.*
- [16] *He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers.*
- [17] *Yet they sinned still more against him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert.*
- [18] *They tested God in their heart by demanding the food they craved.*
- [19] *They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?"*
- [20] *He struck the rock so that water gushed out and streams overflowed. Can he also give bread or provide meat for his people?"*
- [21] *Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel,*
- [22] *because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power.*
- [23] *Yet he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven,*
- [24] *and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven.*
- [25] *Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance.*
- [26] *He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by his power he led out the south wind;*
- [27] *he rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the seas;*
- [28] *he let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings.*
- [29] *And they ate and were well filled, for he gave them what they craved.*
- [30] *But before they had satisfied their craving, while the food was still in their mouths,*

[31] *the anger of God rose against them, and he killed the strongest of them and laid low the young men of Israel.*
[32] *In spite of all this, they still sinned; despite his wonders, they did not believe.*
[33] *So he made their days vanish like a breath, and their years in terror.*
[34] *When he killed them, they sought him; they repented and sought God earnestly.*
[35] *They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer.*
[36] *But they flattered him with their mouths; they lied to him with their tongues.*
[37] *Their heart was not steadfast toward him; they were not faithful to his covenant.*
[38] *Yet he, being compassionate, atoned for their iniquity and did not destroy them; he restrained his anger often and did not stir up all his wrath.*
[39] *He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.*
[40] *How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!*
[41] *They tested God again and again and provoked the Holy One of Israel.*
[42] *They did not remember his power or the day when he redeemed them from the foe,*
[43] *when he performed his signs in Egypt and his marvels in the fields of Zoan.*
[44] *He turned their rivers to blood, so that they could not drink of their streams.*
[45] *He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them.*
[46] *He gave their crops to the destroying locust and the fruit of their labor to the locust.*
[47] *He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamores with frost.*
[48] *He gave over their cattle to the hail and their flocks to thunderbolts.*
[49] *He let loose on them his burning anger, wrath, indignation, and distress, a company of destroying angels.*
[50] *He made a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death, but gave their lives over to the plague.*
[51] *He struck down every firstborn in Egypt, the firstfruits of their strength in the tents of Ham.*

[52] *Then he led out his people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.*
[53] *He led them in safety, so that they were not afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.*
[54] *And he brought them to his holy land, to the mountain which his right hand had won.*
[55] *He drove out nations before them; he apportioned them for a possession and settled the tribes of Israel in their tents.*
[56] *Yet they tested and rebelled against the Most High God and did not keep his testimonies,*
[57] *but turned away and acted treacherously like their fathers; they twisted like a deceitful bow.*
[58] *For they provoked him to anger with their high places; they moved him to jealousy with their idols.*
[59] *When God heard, he was full of wrath, and he utterly rejected Israel.*
[60] *He forsook his dwelling at Shiloh, the tent where he dwelt among mankind,*
[61] *and delivered his power to captivity, his glory to the hand of the foe.*
[62] *He gave his people over to the sword and vented his wrath on his heritage.*
[63] *Fire devoured their young men, and their young women had no marriage song.*
[64] *Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation.*
[65] *Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, like a strong man shouting because of wine.*
[66] *And he put his adversaries to rout; he put them to everlasting shame.*
[67] *He rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim,*
[68] *but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves.*
[69] *He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever.*
[70] *He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds;*
[71] *from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance.*
[72] *With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.*

Psalm 78, ESV

Before We Speak, We Listen (vv. 1-2)

Psalm 78 does not begin with children, programs, or strategies. It begins with a call to listen.

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! (Psalm 78:1, ESV)

Asaph is not offering casual advice. He speaks as God's messenger to God's covenant people. "*Give ear... incline your ears*" is covenant language. Before this generation can tell anything to the next, it must hear what God is saying now. A legacy that honors God does not start with us talking; it starts with us listening.

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old. (Psalm 78:2, ESV)

"Parable" and "dark sayings" do not mean riddles for clever people. Asaph is saying, "I am going to interpret your history. I will show you what your past really means." **Psalm 78** is not just a timeline; it is God's reading of Israel's story.

1. **First**, we must listen humbly. This psalm exposes unbelief, ingratitude, and stubbornness. We are supposed to recognize ourselves in Israel. If we only come to Scripture for inspiration and never for correction, we will not really hear **Psalm 78**.
2. **Second**, we must let God interpret our moment. Asaph gathers "*sayings from of old*" in order to help his generation understand themselves. In Christ, we are part of that same covenant story. We need Scripture to tell us what our fears mean and what faithfulness looks like right now.
3. **Third**, we must hear this psalm through Christ. Matthew tells us that Jesus fulfilled these words when He spoke in parables (**Matthew 13:34-35**). Christ is the greater Asaph, opening His mouth to reveal "things hidden since the foundation of the world." He is the only Israelite Who never forgot the works of God. When **Psalm 78** calls us to listen, it is ultimately calling us to listen to Him.

So before we talk about children, grandchildren, and future members of this church, the first question is simple: are we a listening generation? Do we come to the Word with open ears and soft hearts? A church that will not listen now cannot faithfully speak to those who come after.

"We Will Not Hide Them": The Chain of Testimony (vv. 3-4)

Having called the people to listen, Asaph immediately reminds them of what they have received:

things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. (Psalm 78:3, ESV)

His generation is not starting from scratch. The faith has come to them through human mouths. Their fathers and mothers told the story of the Exodus, the covenant, the commandments, the wilderness, the promised land. Ordinary people spoke, and God used that speech to preserve a people.

Then comes the vow of verse 4:

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. (Psalm 78:4, ESV)

Notice both sides of this.

- **Negatively**: "*We will not hide them.*" To leave the next generation untaught is, in God's language, to hide the truth from them. Silence where God has spoken is not neutral; it is concealment. When we say, "faith is a private matter" or "they will figure it out on their own", **Psalm 78** calls that what it is. It is hiding.
- **Positively**: "*We will... tell*". And what do we tell? Not just rules, though we have rules. Not just morals, though we have morals. Not vague spirituality. We tell "*the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.*" We hand on a God-centered story: Who He is, what He has done in history, how He has saved us in Christ, and what He promises to do.

Verses 7-8 give the aim of this telling:

so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation... (Psalm 78:7-8a, ESV)

Our goal is not simply that the next generation can repeat facts. It is that they would hope in God, remember His works, and obey His Word. But in God's ordinary design, that happens through a chain of testimony: each generation refuses to hide and resolves to tell.

Some of you were blessed because your fathers and mothers did tell you. They opened Scripture, prayed with you, took you to church. Psalm 78 says that was God's kindness through them. You are part of a line.

Others of you did not have that. Perhaps you came to Christ later, or you grew up in a Christian home where the gospel was assumed but rarely explained. Psalm 78 does not minimize that loss. But it invites you to be the generation that breaks the pattern. By grace, you can say, "Whatever was missing behind me, I will not hide the truth from those in front of me."

And this is not only about biological families. The "coming generation" includes the children, teenagers, young adults, and new believers in this congregation. This is a congregational vow: "We will not hide... we will tell."

This is what our "legacy" theme must mean in practice. Legacy is not mainly about money, buildings, or reputation. God's question is much simpler: did you clearly and consistently tell the next generation Who I am and what I have done? Are you building beyond your lifetime?

The Baptist Catechism: A Tool for Not Hiding the Truth

That leads naturally to the catechism. Psalm 78 gives the command: *"We will not hide... but tell"*. The Baptist Catechism helps us obey that command in a clear and structured way.

A catechism is a series of questions and answers that summarizes the main teachings of Scripture. The 1695 Baptist Catechism we will walk through in 2026 asks things like:

- Who is God and why did He make us?
- What does God require us to believe? What does God require us to do?
- What is sin?
- Who is the Redeemer?
- What is justification? Adoption? Sanctification?
- What is the church? What are baptism and the Lord's Supper?

In other words, the catechism gathers *"things that we have heard and known"* (Psalm 78:3) and arranges them so that we can teach them faithfully.

1. First, the catechism clarifies what we are passing on. Many Christians agree we should "teach the faith", but are vague about the content. The catechism refuses that vagueness. It says, "Here is the core of what Scripture teaches." That helps us tell not just a few disconnected stories, but the whole counsel of God in miniature.
2. Second, the catechism equips ordinary believers to teach. Psalm 78 is addressed to *"my people"*, not only to leaders. But many feel unequipped to explain doctrine. You do not have to invent a curriculum. You can sit with one question, one answer, and an open Bible, and slowly work through it with a child, a teenager, or a newer believer. The catechism is a tool for ordinary homes and ordinary conversations.
3. Third, the catechism is for both children and adults. Many of us were never catechized. We have verses, but not structure. Giving a whole year to walk through the Baptist Catechism will help us become a clearer, more stable church. And then, out of that, we will be better able to obey Psalm 78:4: *"We will not hide... but tell"*.

So when you hear “legacy” and “catechism” in 2026, I want **Psalm 78** ringing in your ears. These are not side projects. They are ways of saying together, as a church, *“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”*

Conclusion: Hearing, Remembering, and Telling—By Grace

Psalm 78:1-4 shows us a pattern for a faithful church across generations.

1. **First**, we must be a hearing generation. *“Give ear... incline your ears” (Psalm 78:1)*. Before we think about the *future*, we must come under the Word *now*. Our plans for legacy and catechism will be empty if we ourselves are not listening to Christ in Scripture.
2. **Second**, we must be a remembering generation. Asaph speaks of *“sayings from of old”* and *“things that we have heard and known” (Psalm 78:2-3)*. He is determined not to forget. In Christ, we have even more to remember: the cross, the empty tomb, the gift of the Spirit. Forgetfulness is one of the *great dangers*, remembering one of the *great safeguards*.
3. **Third**, we must be a telling generation. *“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation” (Psalm 78:4)*. That is the vow I am praying we will embrace together. We will not hide. We will speak. We will use sermons, conversations, hospitality, and the catechism to make sure that those who come after us hear and know the works of God.

We will not do this perfectly. **Psalm 78** is very clear about the failures of God’s people. But the psalm also shows us a God Who is faithful, Who *“remembered that they were but flesh”*, Who chose David to shepherd His people. And we know the greater David, the Lord Jesus, Who never forgot, never rebelled, never disobeyed, and Who died and rose to save stubborn people like us.

Like you.

Like me.

So as we move toward a year focused on building beyond ourselves, a year in the Baptist Catechism, let’s ask the Lord to make this true of us: that when the coming generation looks back, they will be able to say,

“They told us the truth. They showed us Christ.

They did not hide the works of God from us.”

And then, by God’s grace, may they take up the same vow:

“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”