

Tuesday, December 20, 2022 • Read Psalm 74

Questions from the Scripture text: Who penned this Psalm (superscript)? What has he concluded from Israel's present circumstances (v1)? But who are Israel, unto God (v2)? What specifically have the enemies destroyed, and in what manner (vv3-8)? What is hindering Israel's understanding (v9)? Whose actions (inactions) are even more troubling than the enemies' (v10-11)? But what has He done in the past, in both creation and redemption (vv12-17)? For Whose sake does the Psalmist want God to act (v18, 22-23)? How does he ask God to think of His people (v19)? What, specifically, does he ask God to remember (v20)? What about them does he present as a plea (v19b, 21)?

What can believers pray when their enemies are given such success that it appears that God is against them? Psalm 74 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty-three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **when the church's enemies are permitted to afflict the church, so that the chastening hand of God appears to be against her, the church can still plead the glory and character of God, and her own pitiable estate and relationship to Him.**

The Psalm takes place in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and the third and final wave of the Babylonian exiling of Judah. There is much that we can learn by how the Psalmist prays.

The silent wrath of God is more troubling than the noisy rage of enemies, v1, 10-11. Enemies rage and destroy; that's what they do. But the Psalmist leads with the fact that this all comes in God's anger against His own people. The first seventeen verses of the Psalm are built on the "Why?" of v1 and the "How long" and "Why" of v10. It is the anger of God (v1) and keeping of His hand in His pocket (v11) that is most dismaying.

The most worthy trait of God's people is that they are His, v2, 19. This is a people in bad spiritual shape. Not only has Judah been slaughtered and exiled by Babylon, but they have no Word from the Lord (v9). Still, there is one hope: they are God's congregation, God's purchase, God's inheritance, God's redeemed, God's dwelling, God's dear and defenseless turtledove.

The great reason for God to act is for the vindication and display of His own glory, v3-8, 18, 22-23. Of all that was destroyed/done during the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, the Psalmist focuses upon the destruction of the temple, emphasizing it with the lively description in vv5-6. The restoration of God's worship (v3-8) and vindication of His Name (v10, 18) are the great reason for Him to act for His own cause (v22).

God's past mighty works give cause to hope for present and future mighty works, v12-17. What He did in creation, what He did at the flood, what He did at the exodus, what He does every day and every night... these are all great displays of His power. So, we may know not only that He has the power but that He is pleased to display that power gloriously. And, we may rejoice that He is pleased to display it in the saving of His people.

A great plea with God is our own pitiable condition, v19-21. Israel are as a defenseless turtledove (v19a). They are the Lord's poor (v19b). They are oppressed (v21a). They are poor and needy (v21b). Because God is compassionate and acts for the glory of His character, our neediness and suffering are strong reasons to raise in prayer that He would act.

The prayer itself is part of its own answer, v9. Finally, let's consider again v9, where a big part of the problem was that they did not have a word from God telling them what would happen. This word would come eventually from the pen of Jeremiah. But the Lord has given them another important word: this very Psalm!

The Lord gives us what we need by His Word. And we often don't need to know details about our situation. What we do need is to call upon His Name in truth. And praise God, He gave them a Spirit-inspired song and prayer when they need it. And thus, He has given it to us in His Word, too. Praise God!

What trouble or suffering are you in? Following this Psalm, what should be your greatest pain in it? But what has the Lord given you in the midst of it? Where is the Lord's Name being dishonored in the church and the world. How does this Psalm help you pray for that situation?

Sample prayer: Lord, You make Yourself known in the gathering of Your people. You have shown Your power in the creation, the flood, the Exodus, and the risings and settings of the sun every single day. But more than that You have shown Your power in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and enthronement of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. For His sake, continue to show Your glorious power by saving us unto the praise of Your Name. For, we ask it in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP80 "Hear, O Hear, Us" or TPH60 "You, O God, Reject and Spurn Us"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Psalm 74. These are the words of god. A contemplation of ASAP. Oh god, why have you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture? Remember your congregation which you have purchased of old? The tribe of your inheritance, which you redeemed. This amount zion where you have dwelt.

Lift up your feet to the perpetual desolations. The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary. Your enemies roar in the midst of your meeting place. They set up their banners, for signs. They seem like men who lift up axes among the thick trees and now they break down. It's carved work.

All at once with axes and hammers. They've set fire to your sanctuary. They have defiled, the dwelling place of your name. To the ground. They said in their hearts, let us destroy them all together. They have burned up all the meeting places of god and the land. We do not see our signs.

There is no longer any profit. Nor is there any among us? Who knows how long? Oh god, how long will the adversary reproach? Well, the anime blaspheme, your name forever. Why do you withdraw your hand even your right hand? Take it out of your bosom and destroy them. For god as my king of all from of old.

Working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by your strength, you broke the heads of the sea serpents and the waters. You broke the heads of leviathan in pieces. And gave him his food to the people, inhabiting the wilderness. You broke open, the fountain and the flood.

You dried up mighty rivers. The day is yours. The night. Also is yours. You have prepared the light and the sun, you have set all the borders of the earth. You have

made summer and winter. Remember this, that the enemy has approached, oh yahweh. And that a foolish people has blasphemed your name.

Oh, do not deliver the life of your total dump. To the wild beast. Do not forget the life of your poor forever. Have respect to the covenant. For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty. Oh, do not. Let the oppressed return ashamed. Let the poor and needy, praise your name.

A rise of god. Plead your own cause. Remember how the foolish man approaches you daily? Do not forget the voice of your enemies. The tumult of those who rise up against you. Increases. Continually.

So far the reading of god's inspired and inherent work. Asap had a big problem with the wicked in psalm 73. Because he was forgetting the holiness of god. He was like a beast before god. But remembering god, doesn't make all our problems go away. Especially if the place of god's holiness, the place of god's worship, the people of god, the true people of god.

Are under attack. And being harmed and damaged. In this case, with the destruction of the Of the temple in jerusalem. When the Babylonians, Even destroyed our temple. Can't be destroyed.

Our temple can't be destroyed. That is the lord. Jesus heaven. And yet the earth, the church does go through many low points. Low points where the few who are faithful in it. Our persecuted for being faithful in the church. And low points where faithful churches. Our battered. By the oppression and persecution.

That comes from outside. Well, in this case, the problem is not That god is, holy the problem, or at least the tension that we feel. Is from the fact. That God is holy. So the problem isn't that we're forgetting that God is holy. The problem is that we're remembering.

We have tension because we remember That god is. Holy. We're like job wondering. If god is, as we have known him to be, how can this be? Why? And part of the answer, of course, is where were you? And i planted the foundations of the earth. Etc. But here, the holy spirit gives us a way to pray.

When? We are remembering the holiness of god and it's really for his sake. For the honor of his glory. For the salvation. And And recovery. Of his people. That we are. That our hearts are longing that our hearts are aching. Agonizing. And so, one of the first things that we see in the psalm is that Uh, it's not the noisy rage of the enemies.

That is bothering asap so much as the apparent. Silence of god. The two. Main. Questions by which As far as a poem or a song. This psalm is arranged or in verse 1 and verse 10. Oh god, why have you cast us off forever? Why does your smoke? Uh, your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture.

And then verse 10. Oh god, how long? Will the adversary? Approach. And the problem in both of those places isn't so much the adversary As it is, the lord himself. That's clear in verse 1. But then you look in verse 10, Why do you withdraw your hand? Even your right hand, take it out of your bosom and destroy them.

Um, So, The picture is of god as if he were a man who could do something. But Uh, we don't really keep our hands here. Uh, you know, over our chest kind of in the fold of our garment, we've got pockets Uh, but that's the picture here. Why are you standing there with your hands and your pockets?

When you could take out your hand and do something with your almighty right hand of power, god And so that's that is the biggest problem. For asap and for the godly as the temples being destroyed, their problem isn't Babylonians. It's the living god and his providence and in his anger and chastening.

This is happening. Because there is that sense that job has and that he says, in different words and different ways a few times in his book. That. And if god is going to deal with me, according to my sin, Then he might as well. Destroy me now. And the same is true with the church.

If the church is going to get fully disciplined every time it needs it, then the church's going to just have a continual string of fully disk being fully disciplined until the time that jesus returns because it's always going to need it. And so there is this crying out. Uh, for god.

To break his silence and end the chase me. Now. The thing that we plead therefore is not how well we are doing. Lord, we don't need the chastening so much right now is not a good way to plead because we do. Uh, notice the way that he pleads, i tried to show it and even in, Um, My tone of voice as i read my expression, As i read the things that the church pleads is that it's his His dwelling place his people.

The place of his holiness, the place of his meaning, the sheep of his pasture. His congregation, his purchase. Uh, from of old. And so are more. Most worthy trait, is that we are here. So when you come to god, And you are pleading and you want to have something to plead.

And you're tempted to be like a worldling who pleads in a fleshly way and says lord, have you not seen all this that i have done and still blah blah blah. No, we don't. We don't do that. That's that's the pharisees and isaiah 58. You know why do we fast?

Do you see it, not? No, we come. We said lord. I'm yours. This is your child. The purchase by your blood. A living stone in your temple. A member of your body, lord jesus. Part of your Right. We're very strong argument. With god or the most worthy trait. Of his people.

Is that we are his And therefore, the great reason for god to act, we see here is the vindication and display of his own glory. Although, there was Uh, much horrible suffering. And slaughter starvation and All manner wickedness. Done to the people and the exile. Is especially the destruction of the sanctuary, the destruction of the temple.

That. The asap focused upon here. Because he's praying that And singing and the spirit is teaching us to pray and saying that god would act For the sake of his own glory. Verse 18, for instance, remember this? The enemy has approached of yahweh. A foolish people has blasphemed your name.

And then it picks that up again. Verse 22. A rhizo god plead your own cause. Remember how the foolish man reproaches you? Daily, do not forget the voice of your enemies. And so, Uh, we have this wonderful truth. That by binding himself to us by covenant, god has made our cause his cause God has made the church's cause his own cause so that jesus says, that whatever has done to him or done to us, he receives His done to him.

Remember what he said to paul. When he was arresting him on the road to Damascus. So all saw, why do you persecute me? This is why verse 20 says, have respect to the covenant. Remember that we are bound to you. And that when they do this, to the place that we worship you, when they do this, to the people

who are called by your name, they're doing it to you.

They're attacking you. Oh, lord, not just us. Their blaspheming your name, arise vindicate, your own name See, we're not like muslims. We don't think that we can somehow vindicate, God's name by taking vengeance. We can't even appropriately, avenge ourselves. Let alone be able to avenge god. Now, that's a foolish and wicked thing that comes from satan invented.

Religions like islam. A believer. Realizes by god's covenantally binding us to himself. That the glorious god has invested the honor of his name. And making things go well with us. And so that gives us something wonderful to plead. Oh, lord. Vindicate, your own name. It's, of course something. We also Plead when we're acting asking for repentance.

Because we dishonor his name. When we sin against him. Even after his name has been put upon us, Now, one of the things that we do is we reason with god and prayer like this is We take his former. Past mighty works. As caused to help for present. And future mighty works.

And so you see there In verses 12 through 17. How he's remembering the creation, he's remembering the flood, he's remembering the exodus drives commentators a little bit crazy because It's like every line is from one of the three and there's no Transition from one to the other, the all team jumbled together.

But that's because he's the same god who has done all of those things. And so he's reasoning from. God's great works in the past. To argue. For god to exercise the same power, and the same justice. And wrath against his enemies and in the same preservation and deliverance of his people.

Uh just as he did in the flood, just as he did, in the exodus, judging the world and saving Noah, judging Egypt, who here is That pictured, as sea serpents and the wife. Well, but saving Israel. And we come and we say you are the same god and this is what you have done in the past.

And what you have done in the past is a greater work even than what we need for you to do now. And so you can trust god because he has shown himself to be God, who delivers his people. In such situations and we have one greater, don't we? Then the flood.

Or the exodus. Do we not have? The cross. And the resurrection. Of our lord jesus christ. To look at that. Great work of god in the past and say he is the same god with the same power and the same purposes and the same faithfulness today, and tomorrow. As he was then.

At calvary as he was that. When he raised. The lord jesus from the dead. Another thing that we see to plead with god is our pitiable and needy condition Verse 19, do not deliver the life of your turtle dove. To the wild beast. Now, a turtle dove may be precious and There may be something to that, but above all a turtle dove is stupid and helpless.

And it is our complete inability to defend ourselves or complete, lack of sense. Uh, to overcome the the enemy by craft. That. That is being argued here. Do not forget the life of your poor. Says verse 19. Verse 21, do not let the oppressed return ashamed. Let the poor and needy.

Praise your name. You see, we know god not just to be a god of great power and faithfulness. But also have great mercy and compassion. I'm foolish, lord. I'm helpless, lord. I'm oppressed lord, i'm poor lord, i'm needy lord. If the lord to whom you pray as a god of compassion, Those are actually arguments to make reasons to give in your prayers.

Because, you know, he loves to help. Those who are Foolish and helpless and depressed. Poor. And maybe such as our god. And such we can come to him. And pray. Now finally the the prayer itself is part of its own answer. And verse 9, one of the great problems was we do not see our signs.

There is no longer any profit nor is there any among us. Who knows how long and then that flows into that. Question that we saw? Already pointed out. Structurally, the introduction to the second half. Oh god. How long will the adversary approach? Well. There were not other prophets at the time, but there wasn't profit named asap.

And instead of god giving him to, right, A prophecy about how long this would happen, which he incidentally did. Uh about the same time through jeremiah you remember in the book that Daniel opened towards the end of the time But what god gave his people by his prophet asap?

At the time was not a manual on how long. But a prayer to pray and a song to sing. While in the midst of it. Because god does not just tell us there will be helped later. And here's when and here's how He comes to us in the midst of it.

And he's our help during The trouble. And that's one of the great gifts that he's given us. In Psalms and songs, and prayers. Like this one. Praise God, for his, great mercy to us and for teaching us How to? Plead that mercy. Before him in prayer. Let us pray.

Our father in heaven, we praise you for you, our great. We praise you, for your faithful, we praise you for your wives. We confess that. We are foolish and weak. The needy. And yet, we thank you that you have even just now reminded us. That you Have found yourself to us and invested your glory and counting us to be your very own and making yourself to be our very own.

We thank you for how. This aspect of your covenant, so encourages us. We pray. Lord for your church. We cry out with the psalmist. How long? Oh, lord. Truly the sanctuary is brought low. Even in places where they think. They have the worship of you. There is so little.

Let us scripturally recognized as your worship. Have mercy of God on your people. Take your hand out of your bosom. Then extend your almighty right hand and bring. Reformation and revival, we pray. And also, Those who are truly. Yours are. Battered and depressed and persecuted. We pray. Oh god, that you would act For the honor of your name that you would arise and defend your own.

Cause We thank you, lord. That you are our comfort. The midst of the trouble. That we are that we may be turtle doves as it were But that we are your own precious turtle dove. And that you care for us? Tenderly. Who pray that your spirit would communicate that care to us, particularly And the rest of this day whenever we are distressed.

That you would make us to remember that. We are yours and help us. Remember to turn that over into prayer. And lift it up to you. And remember before you reminding you in prayer as it were That we are yours and you are ours. Until the day comes, when the enemies are all destroyed.

And you have shattered with the final great act of your power. All opposition. Even so come quickly. Lord Jesus. We ask In your own name. Amen.