

Series: Pathway Through the Psalms

REMEMBER THY CONGREGATION

PSALMS 74

Text: Psalms 74:2

Psalm 74:2

² Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

Introduction:

Asaph struggles over the destruction and defilement of God's House.

The sanctuary was special to Asaph since he helped lead the worship of singing.

We can see his frustration as he recalls a time when God's House was honored and revered.

Note:

1. THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE (VS. 1-8)

At onetime this had been a place of God presence but consider:

A. The Distance (vs. 1)

Psalm 74:1

¹ O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

Asaph recognized that God's presence was not among His people.

The words "cast off" means to reject or push aside.

Asaph feels as though God has discarded His people, however the reality is the people had discarded the Lord.

Sadly today the presence of God has been replaced with programs, promotions, performance and personalities.

Sadly we have become calloused to His presence because of our confidence in our production and proficiency.

Me we remember:

John 15:5

⁵ I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

We've consider not only The Distance but also consider:

B. The Delay (vs. 2-3)

Psalm 74:2-3

² Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. ³ Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

Asaph knew that Israel is God's people and he wonders why God has not already intervened against their enemies.

Sometimes we too wonder why God doesn't do things when we feel they should be done, but again we must remember God knows all – He knows what is needed and when best to take care of the need.

Remember: Psalms 18:30

Psalm 18:30

³⁰ As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

We've consider The Distance and The Delay but also consider:

C. The Defilement (vs. 4)

Psalm 74:4

⁴ Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs.

Roar is the reference to the sound of a lion.

The enemy had destroyed the congregation like a lion devours its prey.

The "ensigns" are the flags of the enemy.

The enemy had displayed their flag, symbolizing their authority, and power in the temple as a sign of mockery.

We see churches today who have allowed the enemy positions of authority and the end result is an assembly that no longer desires company with God but rather a crowd of people.

Let me say that I'm not against a crowd, but we should never give place to the enemy for a crowd.

It's sad today that there is not many distinctions between believers and nonbelievers.

It's often hard to see the difference.

Note:

At salvation we become a new creature.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Galatians 6:15

¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Part of being a new creature is having a new nature.

Nature determines:

- Appetite

An eagle enjoys meat, and parakeet enjoys seeds.

- Behavior

A beagle enjoys running through the briar patch a poodle enjoys running through the house.

Why

That is their nature.

As a new creature the Bible states *“old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

A believer’s appetite should be different both physically and spiritually.

A believer’s behavior should be different.

Asaph was concerned about the defilement he saw in the congregation.

Consider also:

D. The Destruction (vs. 5-8)

Psalm 74:5-8

⁵ A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. ⁶ But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

⁷ They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. ⁸ They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

Those who had built the temple do so with the labor of axe.

The cedars were notorious in Asaph's day, as were the men who cut them.

The trees and the men were reduced to mere ashes in the fire of the enemy.

The spiritual climate is grim to say the least.

It feels as though God is distant, the temple is destroyed, and the enemy has raised the flag of victory over God's people.

We have considered the Spiritual Climate; note secondly:

2. THE SEVERS CONFUSION (VS. 9-11)

Note the problems:

A. No Vision (vs. 9)

Psalm 74:9

⁹ We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

The enemy had set up their signs and removed the sign of God's people.

Most likely Asaph was referring to the instruments and furniture of the temple.

All the things that was used in the worship service had been destroyed or replaced.

Not only is the problem of No Vision but also:

B. No Voice

Psalm 74:9

⁹ We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

The spiritual drought had not only taken away the vision, it had taken away the voices.

Asaph has no spiritual bearings; God is not speaking through the prophets, and therefore cannot determine how long the suffering will last.

Not only was the problem of No Vision or Voice but also:

C. No Victory

Psalm 74:10-11

¹⁰ O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? ¹¹ Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

With limited and inadequate knowledge, Asaph questions why God will not destroy the enemy and raise Israel up in victory.

No doubt there are time we feel the same.

I want to close by briefly considering:

3. THE SINCERE CRY (VS. 18-23)

Psalm 74:18-23

¹⁸ Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. ¹⁹ O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever. ²⁰ Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. ²¹ O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name. ²² Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. ²³ Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

Asaph's plea is somewhat different from the beginning.

With a better understanding of God's power and control, he now begs the Lord to remember the poor.

He pleads that the oppressed not return ashamed.

And fitting to his responsibility as a worship leader he calls for the people to praise the name of the Lord.

Close:

When there is trouble in the house of God it is not because God has left the people, but rather the people have left God.

Leaving the presence of God subjects us to the ways and wiles of the enemy.

May God give us wisdom.