

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Psalm Seventy-Four - Learning What To Think When God's Help Seems No Longer Available (Psalm 74:1-23)

I. Introduction

- A. There are times in the believer's earthly pilgrimage when his *experience* of being in a spiritually destitute state of affairs can leave him wondering if God no longer is disposed to help him again! Maybe his prayer request for a specific need has gone unanswered for *years*, or he feels locked into a fruitless, joyless job!
- B. The experience is not new! Asaph knew it in his day, and wrote about **overcoming** it in Psalm 74:1-23:

II. Learning What To Think When God's Help Seems No Longer Available, Psalm 74:1-23.

- A. The psalm is a "maschil" of Asaph, and that word, "maschil" implies that the psalm is contemplative, designed to make one think deeply about its contents, B. K. Waltke, "Syllabus for Hebrew 204" Class Notes, Dallas Theological Seminary, p. 6. Thus, it is designed to *teach* us something.
- B. Now, in **teaching** us, the psalmist bursts out with an emotional complaint about God, and he asks God why God had "perpetually" spurned the nation, Israel, Ps. 74:1.
- C. It is inconsistent with the Mosaic Covenant for God to spurn His people unless they had sinned, Deut. 28:1-14, 15-68. Yet, since Asaph does not state that sin was the cause for God's silence, and since the Psalm is written under the Spirit's inspiration (2 Peter 1:20-21), we conclude that Psalm 74 identifies with the *experience* of **spiritual FATIGUE** while weighed down in *waiting* to get God's **answer!**
- D. As such, Psalm 74:1-23 is an instruction on handling spiritual **fatigue** while **waiting** for divine help:
 - 1. The negative conditions under which God's people existed when Asaph wrote his psalm were taxing:
 - a. Israel's **experience** had left the *impression* that God was actually angry at the people, and had been angry for some extended period of time, Ps 74:1.
 - b. The sanctuary had been attacked (v. 3) with even its prized carved paneling being desecrated upon being hacked up with axes and hatchets, Ps. 74:6.
 - c. The sanctuary had then been burned down, the dwelling place of God defiled by Gentiles, Ps. 74:7.
 - d. In fact, the attackers had claimed they would crush Israel completely, and destroyed all the other places throughout the land where the Lord had been worshipped, Ps. 74:8.
 - e. On top of this, and what bothered the most, was that God had supplied **NO encouraging** miraculous signs or prophets, and no one seemed to know how long this state of affairs would *last*, Ps. 74:9-10!
 - 2. Accordingly, the Psalmist cried out to the Lord for Him to remember the people He had redeemed from old from the nations, and come to their aid, Ps. 74:2-3, 11.
 - 3. **What encouraged Asaph to make this prayer in FAITH was his RECOLLECTION of God's PAST powerful performances in behalf of His people**, Ps. 74:12-23:
 - a. In the turning point of the psalm, the writer, Asaph affirmed his faith in God for God's **great PAST help to Israel** as follows, Ps. 74:12-17: (a) Asaph claimed that God was his God from antiquity who brought salvation on the earth, v. 12; (b) namely, God was the One Who had opened the Red Sea, breaking the power of Egypt, likened to the monster in the waters, and had crushed the seven heads of Leviathan (mythological monster representing Egypt), Ps. 74:13-14; (c) it was God who had opened the Jordan for the people to enter Canaan, Ps. 74:15; (d) God as Creator of very ancient days had established the sun and moon (cf. Gen. 1:14-15), Ps. 74:16; (e) finally, God had set summer and winter after the Noahic Flood, Gen. 8:22 with Ps. 74:17.
 - b. Based on these ancient precedents, Asaph called upon God to keep His covenant and help the nation gain victory over its destroyers, which destroyers mocked **God** by belittling His people, 74:18-23.

Lesson: *Asaph meant to teach God's people how to handle the seeming INSENSITIVITY of God to alleviate prolonged, severe trials since there had been no divine rescue, no encouragement that such a rescue would occur or even messenger announcing such to be the case! They are to HANDLE such difficulty by recalling God's GREAT indications of LOYAL LOVE to His own by the SCRIPTURE'S record of God's PAST acts that reveal that loyal love, and thus to CONTINUE trusting Him!*

Application: *God wants us to lean upon His WRITTEN WORD of even HIS ANCIENT ACTIONS as precedents of His intents to help us NOW when prolonged difficulty brings on spiritual fatigue.*