

PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Psalm Eighty - Dealing With God's Painful Discipline Upon Spiritually Wayward Relatives (Psalm 80:1-19)

I. Introduction

- A. When one gathers in a worship service with fellow **spiritual** brethren in Christ, the fellowship is both meaningful and mutually edifying. It is something we all should ideally enjoy, cf. Ephesians 4:15-16.
- B. However, there is a unique strain in many households, which is as follows: the lines of **spiritual** brotherhood often do **NOT** follow those of **physical** brotherhood! A mother, father, son, daughter, spouse, aunt, uncle, in-law, etc. may **not** know or fellowship with God, and **that** creates tension! Even **worse**, when God steps into bring **discipline** due to unbelief or carnality on a **relative**, it can really create hurt and confusion with the godly.
- C. Psalm 80:1-19 shows us how to handle God's painful discipline upon wayward relatives as follows:

II. Dealing With God's Painful Discipline Upon Spiritually Wayward Relatives, Psalm 80:1-19.

- A. The psalmist's initial cry for divine assistance in verses 1-2 arose from needs in the Northern Kingdom:
 1. The reference to "Joseph" in verse 1 in speaking of Israel focuses on the relative tribes of Joseph who were predominantly in the Northern Kingdom once it split from the South after Solomon's reign.
 2. The tribes of Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh, all closely related to the patriarch, Joseph would travel together when the whole nation traversed en route to the Promised Land during the Exodus, cf. J. A. Alexander, The Psalms Translated and Explained, p. 341-342.
 3. Since the psalm pictures the nation having been destroyed as a choice vine that was cut down and burned with fire in verse 16, it is presumed that the psalmist wrote this song from the Southern Kingdom in shock from the recent fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, Ryrie St. Bib., KJV fn.
- B. As such, **Psalm Eighty pictures the RESPONSE of PHYSICAL RELATIVES of people who had experienced tragic divine discipline for spiritual waywardness**, cf. 2 Kings 17:6, 7-23.
- C. Thus, Psalm Eighty instructs us on dealing effectively with God's painful discipline upon spiritually wayward relatives as follows:
 1. It shows us that our **reaction** should be one of **unquestioned support** for relatives in pain, 80:2b, 4-6.
 - a. The psalmist put aside the **issue** of past **divisiveness** that marked relations between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel (cf. 2 Kings 12:16-24) to focus on the common **relational roots** both had as a former, single national entity: (a) he wrote of the loss of these Northern peoples as a loss of "us", verse 2, 3, 7, 8, 19 et al.; (b) he listed the tribes closely related to Joseph who traveled together during the journey up from Egypt, as Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh, Ps. 80:2. Though these were united then, the tribe of Benjamin, straddled by the Southern Kingdom's tribe of Judah stayed with the Southern Kingdom during the split with the Northern Kingdom, Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to 1 Kings 11:13! Thus, in a show of **COMPASSIONATE solidarity**, the psalmist of the Southern Kingdom unites Benjamin together with Ephraim and Manasseh in his reference to Joseph's troubled people as the union that **USED** to be of Joseph's people; (c) he likened the nation's spread from the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates under David's **united** reign as what was lost with the fall of the Northern Kingdom. This is another show of solidarity with the fallen, relative kingdom, Ps. 80:11.
 - b. In speaking of the fallen relatives, the psalmist **supportively, sensitively** pictured it as a luxuriant vine that was now laid waste, identifying it as part of the **whole** people of God, Ps. 80:8-18.
 2. It shows us that our **pain** at what has happened to blood-relatives needs to be expressed to God, the intensity of our pain's **growth** expressing itself candidly in prayer:
 - a. As the Psalmist's chorus appears in verses 3, 7 and 19, there is an increasing augmentation of the line to match the intensity of pain felt: God is called merely "Elohim" in v. 3, but "Elohim Almighty" the second time the chorus appears and finally the fully embellished name of "Jahweh Elohim Almighty."
 - b. Accordingly, the Psalmist's growing grief is expressed in growing levels of appeal to God for help!

Lesson: *As human beings who are related to other human beings, God expects us to value the ties we have with these relatives to the extent that their trouble bothers us even if they are wayward and come under God's discipline. Accordingly, God accepts our feeling distraught at their plight even in justly-deserved judgment, and accepts our compassionate petitions of help for them!*