

WHEN LIFE FALLS APART

Friday, May 18

Reading: Psalm 74

Psalm 74:1 *O God, why have you rejected us forever? Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture? 2 Remember the nation you purchased long ago, the people of your inheritance, whom you redeemed—Mount Zion, where you dwelt.*

The destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC was one of the darkest periods in Israel's history. Because of their sin in forsaking God, the Lord sent the Babylonian army to demolish and destroy the Holy City.

2 Chronicles 36:16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against His people and there was no remedy. 17 He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar...19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there. 20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors...

The few righteous suffered with the wicked. They too were killed in the invasion or carried off into exile. It seemed that God had forever rejected them. They had no homeland, no prophets, and no Temple in which to worship and offer sacrifices to God. The opening verses are the mournful cry of one who saw all this happen (74:1-11).

But the author of this psalm has hope by remembering God's power. He is still King and brings salvation (74:12). In his misery, he returns to the mighty acts of God in the past. It was God who "split open" the Red Sea and allowed the Israelites to cross on dry ground (74:13). Though it was the greatest empire of the time, God "crushed" the power of Egypt (represented by the mythic beast Leviathan; 74:14). He provided for His people in the wilderness and stopped the "ever-flowing" Jordan River so they could cross (74:15). Besides all that, God is the Creator who controls day and night, sun and moon, and the changing of seasons (74:16-17). There is nothing too difficult for God! He has done it before and He can do it again!

The author also has hope as he remembers God's covenant (74:18-23). The psalmist has heard how their enemies mock and revile God's name. He is calling for God to vindicate His name and relieve His suffering people because they are afflicted, oppressed, and disgraced. Yet they are God's people - the sheep of His pasture (74:1), the people of Your inheritance whom You redeemed (74:2), Your dove (74:19). The psalmist knows that one day "the poor and needy [will] praise Your name." God had made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The psalmist knew that no matter how bleak the present situation might be, God always keeps His promises.

We all have times when life falls apart - a loved one dies, we lose a job, we get a report of cancer. Any of these things and much more can shake our faith. We may cry out with the author of Psalm 74, "O God, why have You rejected us forever?" But we can take confidence that God is always in control and will always keep His promises. Rest in Him and though you may be poor and needy, Praise His name! (74:21).

THRU THE BIBLE Reading: 1 Kings 13-15; Acts 11