

Pillar Passages – Ps 74
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Well, welcome to another edition of Pillar Passages. Today we look at Psalm 74.

What do you do? Where do you get your grounding when it seems the darkness is advancing on all sides? When wherever you look, it seems the darkness is winning?

That is what Asaph is facing. Asaph, evidently was a first-hand observer of the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C., especially of the temple destroyed under the Chaldeans in 587 B.C. This psalm is an expression of corporate, national mourning.

You see this in the first two verses, O God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against us, the sheep of your pasture? He asks for God to remember His people and to remember the old works that God has done. To not forget them. Does God forget things? No. But this is a respectful way people may talk to God Almighty.

He asks, will You remember Mount Zion where You have dwelt. He's appealing to God's glory, says it's Your glory that's been destroyed here. Look and see what Your foes have done—Your enemies. God's people have enemies. How idolatry reigns. How they have been like lumberjacks swinging axes in a forest of trees, except it's not trees—it's the temple and all of its carved wood. They set Your sanctuary on fire. They said to themselves, we will utterly undo them, utterly destroy them.

What he really grieves is the silence of God in this. There is no longer any prophet. No one speaks. No one can tell us how long this will go on. So, he cries out. He asks God, why do you hold back Your hand of justice? (verse 11) Take it out of the fold of Your garment and destroy them.

The first thing we need to see here is the psalmist does not go silent on God. He is racked with stomach-turning grief. Yet, he does not reject God for it, and he does not go silent on God. Sometimes our greatest impediment to prayer—sometimes behind prayerlessness—is the culprit of disappointment with God. I can say that. That is a cause of prayerlessness in my life sometimes. But the psalmist does not do that. He continues talking to God. He does not go silent on God.

But what is especially instructive here is, he goes further than just continuing to talk with God. He is finding a grounding here in the middle of the psalm. The tip-off is—do you notice everything is in the plural in verses 1-11. Yet, then in verse 12, then number shifts from the plural to the personal—the singular. “Yet, *my* King is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. You divided the sea by Your might; You broke the heads ... You crushed the heads of Leviathan; You gave him as food for the creatures ... You split open springs and brooks; You

dried up every-flowing streams. ... You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth; You have made summer and winter.”

There is something that has changed here. It’s meant to draw our attention. I think what’s happening here is, Asaph is stopping in the middle of his lament here to stabilize himself, and ground himself. How so? He is reminding himself of who he is talking to. Which is so easy to forget when we are in the midst of great grief and pain. It is so easy to forget who we are crying out to. So, he reminds himself, this is a God who has been working salvation in the mists of the earth from of old—for a really, really long time. Who created the earth. Who subdued the earth. Who split the sea in the exodus. Who split the sea and who opened up the springs and brooks. Might this be even the flood that he is referring to, perhaps? Because He spilt open brooks and springs, but then in the exodus He dried up ever-flowing streams.

God has worked in the flood. God has worked in the exodus. God has worked even in creation. God has been at work. God has been at work in a sovereign power. He is in control of all things. He has fixed all the boundaries of the earth. You have made summer and winter. This is his creator. The creator of all things. The sovereign King of all. This is the God who created the flood, the exodus, and all things. And who had been providing for His people for a really, really long time. He is the creator of all things. He is the God who will continue to save.

This landing on, God is the One who has created the heavenly lights and the sun. I think it is no coincidence that Paul lands here in 2 Corinthians 4. When Paul describes how this power is hidden in plain sight in jars of clay. But what is this power that is hidden in plain sight? What is this treasure? It is a power in God (verse 6) who—the very same God who said, let light shine out of darkness in Genesis—who created light itself just by speaking words. That same power is at work today in the gospel. That same power shown in the hearts of the original apostles, to give to them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It overcame the blindness that the god of this world has brought upon the world. It defeated the darkness. This power, is today, still at work in defeating the darkness through the gospel. This power, through the apostles message, through the gospel, is still shining in the hearts of men to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—though it is hidden in plain sight, in the most humblest of packages.

These are truths that we must stabilize ourselves with today—even as we continue to cry out and say; Look, God. Look how the enemy scoffs. Look at how this foolish people are reviling Your name with the laws that they pass; with the persecutions they bring; the exclusions they bring. We still cry out; deliver the soul of Your dove. Deliver the life of Your people to Yourself—not to the wild beast of this culture. Please God, don’t forget the life of the poor in spirit forever. Have regard for the covenant You cut in the shoulders, on the body, in the blood of Your greater David—of Your Son. For the dark place of the land are full of the habitations of violence. But we will trust. We will pray trusting that You are still in the business—even today—of shining that same light, with the same power You used to create light through the gospel. We trust that You will not let the downtrodden to turn back in shame. You will let, instead, the poor and needy praise Your name.

We pray this, trusting that what You already promised to do will happen, and thus we pray for it. We pray confidently that You will arise to defend Your cause. Not for us, but the fame of Your name, defend Your cause. Do not cast off Your creation. Do not forget the clamor of your foes; the uproar of those who rise against You, which goes up continually.

There is one more thing to consider here. Goodness. God must sometimes be willing to give up what He has worked so hard—if we can put it that way—in the past to create. He must be willing to give that up sometimes, to experiences losses for something else. What this psalm point us to is that God is willing to give up even nations for the sake of the heart of His people; for the loyal love of His people for Himself. In this He has glory and our joy in Him.

Again, what must we do but ground ourselves in the gospel. Ground ourselves in who we are talking to even while we cry out. Ground ourselves that He has not fallen asleep. He is still at work pouring out light in the darkness—though that light something is hidden in plain sight, in the humblest of places.

God will do it.

God will not stop.

In the end, the darkness *will* be vanquished.