

Psalms 74-77 – Thursday, January 10th, 2019

- Psalm 74 is a Psalm that I think needs a preface of sorts, such that, it's a troublesome and difficult Psalm, as we will soon see.
- Understanding a little of the back-story may be of some help as we take and tackle what we're told is a contemplation of Asaph.
- Asaph's contemplation comes on the heels of the Babylonian invasion in the year 586 B.C., when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Psalm 74 -- A Contemplation of Asaph. 1 O God, why have You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture? 2 Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, The tribe of Your inheritance, which You have redeemed— This Mount Zion where You have dwelt. 3 Lift up Your feet to the perpetual desolations. The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary. 4 Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place; They set up their banners for signs. 5 They seem like men who lift up Axes among the thick trees. 6 And now they break down its carved work, all at once, With axes and hammers. 7 They have set fire to Your sanctuary; They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground. 8 They said in their hearts, "Let us destroy them altogether." They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land. 9 We do not see our signs; There is no longer any prophet; Nor is there any among us who knows how long. 10 O God, how long will the adversary reproach? Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever? 11 Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand? Take it out of Your bosom and destroy them. 12 For God is my King from of old, Working salvation in the midst of the earth. 13 You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. 14 You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, And gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness. 15 You broke open the fountain and the flood; You dried up mighty rivers. 16 The day is Yours, the night also is Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun. 17 You have set all the borders of the earth; You have made summer and winter. 18 Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O LORD, And that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. 19 Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast! Do not forget the life of Your poor forever. 20 Have respect to the covenant; For the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty. 21 Oh, do not let the oppressed return ashamed! Let the poor and needy praise Your name. 22 Arise, O God, plead Your own cause; Remember how the foolish man reproaches You daily. 23 Do not forget the voice of Your enemies; The tumult of those who rise up against You increases continually.

- Psalm 74 is difficult in the sense that Asaph is very troubled and even dismayed by what he sees as God's silence and inaction.
- What makes this so hard for him is that he knows full well what God is able to do and for some reason He chooses not to do it.
- The take away from this valuable Psalm is that often times God deems it fit to remain silent in order that we would learn to trust.

Psalm 75 -- To the Chief Musician. Set to "Do Not Destroy." a Psalm of Asaph. A Song. 1 We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. 2 "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. 3 The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly. Selah 4 "I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,' And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn. 5 Do not lift up your horn on high; Do not speak with a stiff neck.' " 6 For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. 7 But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another. 8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain and drink down. 9 But I will declare forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10 "All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."

- Psalm 75 is clearly Asaph's answer to Psalm 74 and its placement within the canon of scripture is one we can be thankful for.
- This because, God will absolutely not remain silent indefinitely, rather, He will ultimately have the final word in His judgment.
- Such is the case with this song that Asaph pens under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as God rules over all and overrules all.

Psalm 76 -- To the Chief Musician. On Stringed Instruments. A Psalm of Asaph. A Song. 1 In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. 2 In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion. 3 There He broke the arrows of the bow, The shield and sword of battle. Selah 4 You are more glorious and excellent Than the mountains of prey. 5 The stouthearted were plundered; They have sunk into their sleep; And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands. 6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep. 7 You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry? 8 You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still, 9 When God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed of the earth. Selah 10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; With the remainder of wrath You shall gird Yourself. 11 Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay them; Let all who are around Him bring presents to Him who ought to be feared. 12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes; He is awesome to the kings of the earth.

- Psalm 76 is a very interesting Psalm and this for a number of reasons not the least of which is what the song was written about.
- Namely, that of the miraculous defeat of the massive Assyrian army that had encamped around Jerusalem to destroy Israel.
- But God will surely make the wrath of man to praise Him by virtue of what He did to deliver His people from total annihilation.

2 Kings 19:35 - And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead.

G. Campbell Morgan – "So perfect is His government that by judgment He compels evil to serve His purpose, making the wrath of men to praise Him."

Psalm 77 -- To the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm of Asaph. 1 I cried out to God with my voice—To God with my voice; And He gave ear to me. 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; My soul refused to be comforted. 3 I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah 4 You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5 I have considered the days of old, The years of ancient times. 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, And my spirit makes diligent search. 7 Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? 8 Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? 9 Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah 10 And I said, "This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." 11 I will remember the works of the LORD; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. 12 I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God? 14 You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. 15 You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah 16 The waters saw You, O God; The waters saw You, they were afraid; The depths also trembled. 17 The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound; Your arrows also flashed about. 18 The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook. 19 Your way was in the sea, Your path in the great waters, And Your footsteps were not known. 20 You led Your people like a flock By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

- You'll forgive me for saying this in this way, but Asaph is on the brink of a nervous breakdown and he's about to lose his mind.
- Then in verse 10, Asaph comes to his senses as it were, which begs the question of what changed by the end of the Psalm.
- He remembered then meditated on that which he knows to be true about God's goodness, which contradicts all of his feelings.