

“GIVING THANKS IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLE”

PSALM 79:1-13

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INTRODUCTION

When we are having troubles, are we more concerned for our problems or for God’s glory? (See v. 9)

And even when in the midst of our troubles, can we give thanks to God, knowing that He does all things well and will resolve all for His glory and for our good? (See v. 13). Romans 8:28 is always true—especially in light of Rom. 8:29; God uses even troubles and heartaches to conform us to the image of His Son.

EVEN IN THE MIDST OF THE GREATEST CALAMITY, GOD HELPS, DELIVERS, AND FORGIVES HIS PEOPLE. GIVE THANKS.

The time of this psalm was undoubtedly after the Babylonian captivity of Judah. The psalmist may have been one of those left behind in the devastated land—see v. 7. This psalm has numerous similarities with Psalm 74:

- The painful cry “how long, O LORD” [God; 74:9, 10].
- The temple’s desecration in 79:1 with 74:3, 7.
- The giving over of bodies to the wild beasts in 79:2 with the mention of the enemy as “the wild beast” in 74:19.
- The “reproach” of Israel’s God in 79:12 with 74:10, 18, and 22—“revile, spurn, reproach”.
- The shepherd/sheep relationship of God with His people (see v. 13; cf. Pss. 74:2; 77:20; 78:52, 72; 80:1).
- Both psalms have the same “deep pathos” and “the same picturesque force of description”, and both may be referred to as “the funeral anthem of a nation” (P. 74).
- The psalm is aptly placed after Psalms 77 and 78 that recall God’s saving actions under Moses and David.

This psalm acknowledges that God has justly punished the nation for its sins, so the nation pleads for forgiveness. Yet, these nations have acted with ungodly motives and are themselves more wicked than Israel and are certainly deserving of punishment (cf. Daniel’s prayer in 9:4-19). God has great power, and yet His people are still in bondage (v. 11).

The psalm is full of pathos, yet also “indignation” at the actions of the enemies and that God’s honor be upheld. The enemy has attacked God’s “inheritance”, His “temple.” They have mistreated God’s “servants” and His “godly ones.” The concern of the psalm goes well beyond the personal concerns of the psalmist and of his personal friends.

This psalm has two basic divisions: 1. Lament over Jerusalem’s destruction (vv. 1-4); 2) Prayer for help (5-13).

Those verses have further subdivisions: a. Turn divine wrath toward the wicked nations (5-7); b. Prayer for aid and pardon (8-9); c. Deliverance for the needy and vengeance for the guilty (10-12), d. Praise to God for His help (13).

I. LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM’S DESTRUCTION (1-4)

A. Invasion, defilement, ruination (1)

- “Your inheritance”; Your holy temple.
- Note mention of “nations/heathen” in vv. 1, 6, 10 and “neighbors/those around us” in vv. 4, 12.

B. Bodies lying as open prey for birds and beasts (2); “no one to bury them” (3b); cf. Jer. 7:33.

- To leave dead bodies unburied was “a great aggravation of the calamity.”
- These are bodies of “God’s servants.”
- The flesh of “your godly ones”—objects of your loyal love, who are in a special covenant relationship with the God who has promised them benefits and protection and with whom they have pledged loyal-love and faithfulness in return.

C. Blood poured out like water—no value nor concern or scruple (3).

D. Reproach, scoffing, derision (4); these “neighbors” and surrounding peoples are evidently the nations nearby such as the Edomites and Moabites who were all too happy to see the ruination of Israel by Babylon (cf. 137:7—Edom said “Raze it, raze it to its very foundation”; Lam. 4:21-22—the “daughter of

Edom rejoices and is glad, but “the cup will come around to” them also. Other prophetic books elaborate upon this taunting, mockery, and even participation in Israel’s devastation by the enemy army (cf. e.g. the book of Obadiah).

II. PRAYER FOR HELP (5-13)

- A. Turn wrath away from Israel to the wicked nations (5-7). God is holy and cannot tolerate sin.
1. How long will you be angry—“forever?” Your “jealousy/jealous wrath” burn like fire?
 2. “Pour out” (cf. v. 3—blood) wrath on the wicked enemy—not on us any longer (6-7)—**Jer. 10:25**
Cries for vengeance do not need to be motivated by human anger and selfish vengeance. Rather, godly persons desire for wickedness to be checked and for ungodliness to receive its due punishment from a righteous God.
 - a. They don’t know You.
 - b. They don’t call on Your name.
 - c. They have devoured Jacob/laid waste his habitation/pasture (7).
- B. Send aid and pardon (8-9).
1. Don’t remember our forefathers’ iniquities any longer, we acknowledge and repent. Ex. 20:5; cf. 34:7
 2. Let your compassion come to meet us. “We are brought very low.”
 3. “Help us.” “Deliver us.” “Forgive our sins.”
 4. You are the “God of our salvation; “Your name” must receive glory; act for “Your name’s sake.”
- C. Deliver the needy and bring vengeance on the guilty (10-12)
1. Why should the nations mock, saying: “Where is their God?” (10)
 2. Let vengeance be known among the nations so that we see it! (10-12)
 - According to the “greatness of Your arm/power.”
 - For the blood of Your servants—cf. Gen. 4—the blood of Abel; Rev. 6:9-11—of saints.
 - For the groaning of the prisoner—whole nation as well as specific saints.
 - For the “children of death”—those appointed to die—preserve them. parallel in Ps. 102:20.
 - Return to our neighbors sevenfold—cf. Gen. 4:15, 24—completeness of punishment—the reproach with which they have reproached God—the Lord.
 - Let them carry such “in their bosom.
 - God can’t save from visible problems, or even that God’s almighty power is limited, or His vaunted love for His people is not so great after all.
- D. Praise God for His help (13).
1. From “We Your people, the sheep of Your pasture.”
 2. Thanks will be forever—never-ending due to life beyond this one.
 3. We will tell of “Your praise” to all generations to come.

CONCLUSION

I don’t care how bad you have it—it has not been this bad, ever! Not even the victims of hurricanes recently have had it this bad! Note how even very bad circumstances result in God being prayed to and praised and thanked. Tragedies tend to bring people to God! **Cf. the recent mass shooting in Las Vegas.**

I repeat what I stated at the beginning: When we are having troubles, are we more concerned for our problems or for God’s glory? (See v. 9).

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