

A Prayer for Dearborn |Psalms 74

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 April 2021

[0 : 00] Psalm chapter 74, I want to read to you verse 1 through 9, and I'm going to skip to verse number 20. O God, why hast thou cast us off forever? Why does thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed, this Mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

Thine enemies roar in the midst of the congregation. They set up their ensigns for signs, a man of famous according, as he had lifted up an axe upon the thick trees. And now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

They have cast fire into the sanctuary, and they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. They said in their hearts, let us destroy them together. They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the Lamb.

We see not our signs. There is no more any prophet, neither there are any among us, that knoweth how long. Verse 20. Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of habitations of cruelty.

[1 : 05] And let not the oppressed return ashamed. Let the poor and needy praise thy name. Arise, O God. Plead thine own cause. Remember how the foolish man reproaches thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies.

The torment of those that rise up against thee increases continually. Heavenly Father, I ask that you be with us, Lord. We have a short time, Lord, but I pray that your word will have its desired effect upon the hearts of believers as we look and see and we feel the emotions of knowing that there's places in this world, Lord, habitations of cruelty that need a prophet, Lord, that need a place among them.

Pray that you give us understanding. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. There's a song that we sing here at church. It says, do you believe that the world is broken? And we respond with, it is, right?

And we believe that the world is broken. And Josh touched on that, that we most certainly live in what is a broken world. We ended Psalm chapter 73. And the pinnacle of that passage was that Asaph was jealous at the wicked and envious at the foolish.

But then it said that in verse number 17, it says, until I went into the sanctuary of God, then I understood their end. He got perspective when he went into the sanctuary. But what if in this chapter we get to a place where the sanctuary is not there, that it's taken away?

[2 : 22] This is a prayer of lament, corporate lament, where a group of people are praying and they're brokenhearted over the loss of the temple and over the hiddenness of God's plan for the future.

So in the next 15 minutes, I'd like for us to end the night praying for places like Dearborn and different places in this world. But I want you to see that in the dark places of the earth, we can ask God to arise and to plead His own cause.

And as a result, I believe we should ask God to move in those places. 2 Corinthians chapter 25 is probably the historical account that they're responding to. There's about a couple different things that could be going on, but they read about the same.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 25, it says in verse 10, And the armies of the Chaldees that were the captain of the guard break down the walls of Jerusalem round about. Now the rest of the people that were left in the city and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon with the remnant of the multitude, the Nebuchadnezzar and the king of the guard carry away.

Verse 14, And the pots and the shovels and the snuffers and the spoons and the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered took they away. That the sanctuary had come into it and they had destroyed it.

[3 : 28] And now here's a prayer from Asaph leading a group of people that are brokenhearted over the broken condition in which they were living in. And we can hear as they're speaking about it.

And it gives us words. I've said many times that Psalms gives us words, the motions that we're feeling. So we can go to the Psalms when we don't have words. But sometimes we come to a Psalm and we feel an emotion that we need to put words to and we need to be praying about.

Our hearts shall be broken for places around the world that does not have a gospel preaching church, that does not have the presence of God, that does not have the message of hope that is among them.

Verse 20, it says, For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. If you travel the world or if you even experience things in your hometown outside of a little circle, you'll see that we live in a very evil and a broken world.

Some years ago, I traveled with the police because I was just so enamored by Alpharetta. I just thought everything must be so nice here, you know. And I get to realize that that's not the case, that there is habitations and there's darkness that are here.

[4 : 32] There are limitations that tells us that our eyes affect our heart. There's a moment I'll never forget in India. I was in a room about the size of this auditorium. It's near the burning ghats, which is where the bodies were being burned.

And that alone is enough to just to become overwhelming. And I had been there before, but I found myself somewhere new. And where I went to was a place where elderly people had come.

And in this room, all along the walls, and it was a concrete building. And in the middle, everywhere I could look were elderly people. And it looked like some kind of retirement home.

And I began to ask a translator, you know, what's going on? I didn't understand it. And that people were moving while they were still alive to this river. So that when they die, their body would be burned.

Because it's easier for them to travel now while they're living. Than the family to have the expense of moving their body afterwards. And I was so overwhelmed. I mean, there's smoke in the air.

[5 : 31] The ashes of the bodies are burning. I'm looking on the faces of these people. And they just were completely oblivious that they were going to spend eternity separated from God.

You've seen these places. Not long ago, we learned about in Nigeria, a church, a pastor was saying, if you will get this oil that I'm going to spill out here on the ground.

And if you touch this or if you get it, then you'll be healed or you'll be wealthy. And people were trampled to death. So not just inside of buildings of churches and outside of it.

We live in a world that is broken. And there's a description here. The children of Israel lost their identity. The land, the Davidic king, the temple. An enemy desires the sanctuary.

Verse 3. Even all the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. And instead of hearing the work of the priest, they heard the roaring of enemy voices. Verse 4. That enemies roar in the midst of the congregation.

[6 : 28] And the place of the altar, there they set up, verse 4, in signs for signs. And the place that God should have been worshipped had been destroyed. And it wasn't happening.

You know, when Jesus comes into and he turns the table over with the money changers, there's so much going on in that story. But in that place, strangers and foreigners are supposed to be able to go in and to look in and see people worshipping the one true God.

And because of that courtyard now being filled with commercialism and all that, they weren't able to do that. Here we have in the sanctuary, we have it being destroyed. The enemy to come in.

This habitation of cruelty is taking over. Verse 5. It says, A man that was famous according to Lippon X. Now he's going through and he is knocking things down. He's breaking them down.

And what was the goal? Verse 7. Thou hast cast fire in the sanctuary. They have defiled the casting down. The dwelling place of thy name to the ground. The enemy's plan has always been the same.

[7 : 25] And it is to defile the name of our one true God. It is to make it so that in the places that he is being preached and being known, that they would be destroyed. The enemy wanted to make sure there wasn't a place left.

Verse 8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together. They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land. They didn't want there to be a place that is left. Even though Josh here does look like a priest.

All right. We know that he's not. And we know that the church is not the temple. It's not the synagogue. It's not the sanctuary. But we know the enemy's plan is always the same.

That any place where Jesus is being proclaimed and exalted, he wants to destroy it. In 2018, there was a picture that went around. And it said, That's not true.

But it was believable. Right? It sounds like something that would happen. It sounds like the direction that the enemy would love to take it to. He would love to see these places that are closed.

[8 : 30] And then they said, What is the most horrific part? Verse 9. We see not our signs. There is no more any prophet. Neither are there any among us that knoweth how long. And that was the question that was being asked. How long?

Oh God, why has thou cast us off forever? How long is this going to happen? In verse 11, Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom. Take your hands out of your pockets.

God, help us. How long is this going to be? We have no hope. And there was no prophet among them that was able to answer their question to say, How long are we going to be in here? And these questions and their lament caused them to reflect upon the darkness and insecurity, the doubt and uncertainty of God's people they felt during the period of exile.

This is a strong lament. You have those times in your lives where you say, God, I'm lamenting. I don't understand why you're doing this. We looked at that at Psalm 77 a few weeks ago. God, I don't understand what you're doing.

But then you have that place that you can go, like Asaph until I went into the sanctuary. But when you get to a place and you say, God, I don't even have a place where I can go anymore. Some of us experienced that before.

[9 : 34] When you say, God, I can't even find refuge in you. I can't even find refuge in your goodness. It isn't because God had changed. He's always the same and he's faithful. But in this passage, because of sin among the people of Israel, that place had been destroyed, the place that they would go to, the place where the sacrifices would take place, the places that they could, that was so central to their lives and all those things that were going on, it wasn't there.

And they lamented it. And they said, God, this is this world. This is a habitation of cruelty. There's no place to go. When Pastor and Brother John and a few of us went to India the first time, I speak about India a lot.

I've spent more time there than in other countries. But we asked a taxi driver, can you take us to the nearest church? And they were just like, don't know what you're talking about. It just did not compute in that part of town.

Many places in the world, you could hop in a taxi and you could say, take us to the nearest church. And they would say, it just doesn't compute. It doesn't make sense to us what you're saying. It's a horrible place when you do not believe that you can find shelter in the goodness of God.

It's horrible that people would be brought up in a city, in America, and they would never know of the gospel message. They would never know what it's like to be able to go before God and to pray to Him.

[10 : 51] That they would never know what it's like to understand grace. That even at the end of their life when they would say, do you have any assurance of your salvation? They would say, even our most famous prophets had no assurance of their salvation.

I'll stand before Allah. And if He's having a good day, then maybe I'll spend eternity with Him. And if not, maybe I won't. Right? No assurance of that salvation. Living in that constantly, it would just be horrendous.

And the questions that they asked caused them to remember. So as they asked these questions, verse 11, it says, why withdrawest thy hand, even thy right hand? And then it changes. Look at verse 12.

And all these laments, you see them just asking the hard questions. And they're saying, God, because of our sin, there's no longer this sanctuary where we can go to. Not only a place for us, but the enemy is being exalted.

Just like David said, is there not a cause? It's that saying that this person is blaspheming you, and there's no place, Lord, that is standing in opposition to it.

[11 : 48] But as they ask these questions, then they get to remember something. Verse 12, for God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. And then in verse 13, he says, you divide the sea.

You're the creature. All creatures belong to you. Verse 15, thou dost cleave the fountain of the flood. The earth belongs to Him. Verse 16, the day is thine, and the night is also thine. Thou now hast prepared the light and the sun.

All the time belongs to you. Verse 17, thou hast set the borders of the earth. Thou hast made summer and winter. All the seasons belong to you. And so when you're standing in a place, whether it be in India or in Dearborn, or wherever you're at in your life, in your family, and you're looking around and saying, this place is absolutely forsaken by God.

This place is a habitation of cruelty. I don't see God's presence that you can be reminded that God is in control of every season, of everything, and that for God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth, that God is able to do a work, that the odds cannot be stacked so much against Him that He cannot work.

God had heard their prayers in the past. It's always upon their mind about the exodus. Verse 2, which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance has redeemed. These words purchased and redeemed bring us back to Exodus chapter number 2, verse 23.

[13 : 08] And Joshua and Abedin's presentation alluded to it. It was a time where they cried out in their bondage, where they, for the reason of bondage, God heard their growings. God remembered the covenant with Abraham and Isaac and with Jacob.

And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them, that God heard the prayers of these people, and He moves on their behalf. Daniel, he stumbles upon Jeremiah's scroll in chapter, verse 9 of Daniel, and he prays the same thing.

Verse 4, When you do not feel the presence of God, when you do not see the presence of God, when you do not see a place for Him to be worshipped, that God is still the King of this world, He still hears prayers.

And when people are under bondage, we can cry out to God, and we can ask Him to help. Prayer calling for God to move on their behalf. There's seven imperatives in the remaining of the chapter.

It says, Remember, forget not, deliver not, let not, arise, and plead. These laments plead with God to fix what is wrong in this world. Do you believe this world is broken?

[14 : 25] It is. And you can pray to God, and you can ask Him to move. In prayer requests the other night, Selah's prayer request for Bertie was, God, she said, pray that God gets Bertie out of the hospital.

Like, that's good, alright? God get Bertie out of the hospital. Selah believes that she can pray to God, and that God moves in this world. It's a nice thing to say that when we pray, it changes us.

That's true. When we meditate on the Word of God, it changes us. But that is making less of what God promises to His children. That when we pray, the hand of God can move in this world.

And so, missionaries, no matter what situation you find yourselves in someday, where it seems like God has never been where you're going, and that He would never come there, you can cry out to Him. And no matter what situation you find yourself in the family, God has taken Christian families, and He's turned our lives upside down, and we find ourselves in the darkest places, and we feel like we're a thousand miles away from God, and He can't work in those situations, that God will hear our groanings, and that God will make His name known, because He will plead His cause.

So, we ask God to move. Verse 3, lift up thy feet unto the perpetual dissolution. God, I want you to move. God, I'm standing here, and I'm in this mess, and God, I believe that you will do something for your namesake.

[15 : 42] God, I want you to move. I want you to have respect in the covenant, Lord. I want you to see where I'm at. And when you pray that, you're saying, God, I'm trusting what the Word says. If fighting against the temptation to believe only what we can see with our eyes, asking God to remember connects our present struggles with the historic faithfulness of God.

And so, Josh, when you're there in Dearborn, man, and it's been a while, and you just don't know, you just don't know if anybody's going to come through those doors, and your family's been out there, they've been knocking on doors, you've been inviting people to the gospel, you hear the call of prayer, which is being installed in part of that town, and nothing around it looks like God is moving.

He will hear your prayers, and you can ask Him to move. You can ask Him to do something, and that's wonderful. In your lives, no matter what situation you find yourself in, you can say, God, I want you to move for your glory.

So here's a prayer for Dearborn, which is also a prayer for whatever city missionaries will go to. It's also a prayer for your family and those that you're around when you feel like you're in a situation that is completely God-forsaken.

Here's some things that we can pray. Verse 18, it says, Remember this, that the enemy has reproached. The psalmist prays for the sake of God's name and reputation. O Lord, that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

[17:02] The prayer is saying, God, in the midst of all of this, people don't know you're wonderful, and I want them to know you're wonderful. That the people of Dearborn don't know how wonderful and how loving and how gracious you are.

And God, I want you to build a church. I want you to do something so they will know that you're worthy of being worshipped. The psalmist prays for the sake of God's praise. O let not, verse 21, O let not the oppressed return ashamed.

Let the poor and needy praise thy name. God, I want your name to be praised in this circumstance. God, I don't want you just to fix it, but in fixing it, Lord, I want your name to be known.

In fixing it, Lord, I want you to be praised. And the psalmist prays for the sake of God's faithfulness. Have respect unto the covenant for the dark place of earth are full of the habitations of the cruelty.

We have promises of God. Here they're going back to the promise made unto Abraham that he was going to be with them, that he was not going to forsake them. But now today, inside of the church, we have promises given to us as well, that the gates of hell will not prevail, that he will be with us.

[18:06] Lo, until the end of the earth, that God's presence will be with you. So no matter what situation you're in, you can pray to God. And when you pray to God, you need to ask him to move and to do something.

And I want to pray for every one of you in here. And I want you to ask God in whatever situation you're in, to believe that he can move and he can do something. And ask words that are imperatives, like, get Bertie out of the hospital.

God, let me see somebody saved. God, bring healing to my family. Father, give me forgiveness. God, repair this. Use those kinds of words when you talk to him, because he will do something in your lives and we can talk to him.

And I want to challenge you to do that tonight. I want you to either come to this altar. I want you to pray there in your seat. But I want you to take a moment tonight. And I want you to pray for Dearborn, Michigan. And I want you to pray and say, God, you see beyond what we even heard about tonight.

We saw a view from the top, Lord. But you see inside of those homes. You see inside of the mosque. You see inside of these people. And you hear people that are crying out to you, that are groaning, that people say, I know that there's more that's going on.

[19:16] I know that I'm not finding hope in this. And God, we're asking you to move on behalf of those people for your praise and for your namesake, and so that people will see that you're faithful.

And then pray for your situation. You say, I just don't know what to do. I'm just in a mess. This is just an ugly situation. I don't know how I got here. Well, cry out to God and ask Him to move.

Ask Him to do what He can do in your story. Heavenly Father, I thank You for Your Word, Lord. I thank You for the lament where we see people that are crying out, that have seen something horrendous.

They've seen the destruction of the sanctuary. And, Lord, they're crying out to You to restore something. Lord, I believe that in this room, Lord, there may be people in here tonight, Lord, that are in situations that just seem God-forsaken.

They just don't see Your presence. They don't feel Your presence. And now, Lord, they lament. And they say, God, how long? We don't have any hope. And I pray that tonight, Lord, they will see that You are a promise keeper.

[20 : 17] You are one that loves them. And that You will move on their behalf. And they will pray some bold and some strong prayers where they ask You to move. Father, I pray for the city of Dearborn.

I pray for the neighbors of the people that Joshua moved beside. I pray for the people that will be around where he will rent a building. I pray, Lord, that they will have a message of hope that is delivered to them that will absolutely transform their lives and that will spread, Lord, around the world.

With every head bowed and every eye closed, I want you to take a moment. Would you pray for the city of Dearborn? Would you pray for the situations that you're in? Would you pray for those habitations of cruelty that you have seen?

Amen.