

Psalm 80

Read: Psalm 80:1-19

Summary:

3 out of every 10 Psalms are laments and Psalm 80 is one of them. A lament is 'the cry of anguished people grieved by their own failure and God's seeming absence'. God would rather we tell Him how we feel to his face rather than to others 'behind his back' so to speak... some have claimed that worship that never complains is untruthful. In difficulties faith is not positive thinking but is asking God to intervene.

Verse 1-3 We believe that the situation leading to this Psalm being written was the taking of the 10 Northern Tribes of Israel into exile. The people are desperate as they plead on God the shepherd. The Old Testament often referred to God as the shepherd of His people: on who guides, protects and fights for his people, one who was tender and tough and one who was sensitive and who had authority. When approaching God in prayer the Psalmist reminds us of the mercy seat on top of the ark.... We do not ask because of what we deserve.

Verse 4-7 This section can be disturbing – we expect God to be angry with our sin but not with our payers. In the desert God had provided bread from heaven but now they are being forced to drink bowlfuls of their own tears! The Psalmist keeps returning to the refrain.... O how we long for the Blessing of God (as declared by the priest in Numbers 6). Even in our desperate times we must remember that God listen... there is no sign on His door 'do not disturb'

Verse 8-13 Throughout the Old Testament another image that we often see is that of the people as a Vine. God choose them, uprooted them from Egypt and then re-planted them into the Promised Land. They are meant to know fruitfulness and prosperity. However here we read that the surrounding wall has been broken down leading to casual plundering by foes ad the tragic outcome is that of fire not fruit.

Verse 14-19 Instead of being named the 'son of trouble' there is the picture of the father re-naming the child as 'son of my right hand' ...an image of intimacy! This Psalm provides many motives why in times of trial that we must pray: sense of shame, a sense of history and a sense of destiny. Ultimately we must come to Jesus who declared Himself to be the true vine (the perfect man) and also the good shepherd (God)

Application:

Please select from the following questions, encourage all honestly take part and make time to pray for each other.

1. What did God say to you on Sunday and what are you going to do as a result?
2. How do you feel that God sees you? Son or daughter of trouble or son or daughter of His right hand? Why?
3. In what ways do you understand that God removes the 'protecting walls' around our lives and what can we do about it?
4. In what ways are you fruitful in your life? How would you like to be more fruitful?
5. Share how you have coped (or not) when you pray and it seems as if God is not listening.
6. How honest are you with God in worship? How would you like to change?
7. Pray for those who feel in a tough place at the moment.