



## PSALM 74, PART 2

Look Up and Remember

This is Holly with Presence Point and welcome to our *Psalms for Shepherds* series. Today once again we're in *Psalm 74*. As you may remember from our last time together, this psalm is a community lament of the Jewish people. The nation of Israel had been ravaged by the Babylonians, the city of Jerusalem had been devastated, and the temple had been destroyed and burned. The Israelites felt desperate, like all was lost. And the psalmist leads the community in telling God how they feel and, in essence, questioning why God allowed the catastrophic events to happen.

As you may remember from our reading last week, in verse 12 of this psalm, the psalmist reminds the Israelites how God had been faithful in the past. He was clearly recognizing that although everything around them seemed destroyed, the essentials had not been touched by the enemy. In other words, the nation still had Jehovah as their God. His Word and His covenant had not been changed. And, just as today, Jehovah God was at work!

If you can, follow along in the App as I read *Psalm 74*.

<sup>1</sup> O God, why have you rejected us so long?

Why is your anger so intense against the sheep of your own pasture?

<sup>2</sup> Remember that we are the people you chose long ago,  
the tribe you redeemed as your own special possession!  
And remember Jerusalem, your home here on earth.

<sup>3</sup> Walk through the awful ruins of the city;  
see how the enemy has destroyed your sanctuary.

<sup>4</sup> There your enemies shouted their victorious battle cries;  
there they set up their battle standards.

<sup>5</sup> They swung their axes  
like woodcutters in a forest.

<sup>6</sup> With axes and picks,  
they smashed the carved paneling.

<sup>7</sup> They burned your sanctuary to the ground.  
They defiled the place that bears your name.

<sup>8</sup> Then they thought, "Let's destroy everything!"  
So they burned down all the places where God was worshiped.  
<sup>9</sup> We no longer see your miraculous signs.  
All the prophets are gone,  
and no one can tell us when it will end.  
<sup>10</sup> How long, O God, will you allow our enemies to insult you?  
Will you let them dishonor your name forever?  
<sup>11</sup> Why do you hold back your strong right hand?  
Unleash your powerful fist and destroy them.  
<sup>12</sup> You, O God, are my king from ages past,  
bringing salvation to the earth.  
<sup>13</sup> You split the sea by your strength  
and smashed the heads of the sea monsters.  
<sup>14</sup> You crushed the heads of Leviathan  
and let the desert animals eat him.  
<sup>15</sup> You caused the springs and streams to gush forth,  
and you dried up rivers that never run dry.  
<sup>16</sup> Both day and night belong to you;  
you made the starlight and the sun.  
<sup>17</sup> You set the boundaries of the earth,  
and you made both summer and winter.  
<sup>18</sup> See how these enemies insult you, Lord.  
A foolish nation has dishonored your name.  
<sup>19</sup> Don't let these wild beasts destroy your turtledoves.  
Don't forget your suffering people forever.  
<sup>20</sup> Remember your covenant promises,  
for the land is full of darkness and violence!  
<sup>21</sup> Don't let the downtrodden be humiliated again.  
Instead, let the poor and needy praise your name.  
<sup>22</sup> Arise, O God, and defend your cause.  
Remember how these fools insult you all day long.  
<sup>23</sup> Don't overlook what your enemies have said  
or their growing uproar.

One of the most applicable lessons in this psalm is how, when the psalmist lifted his eyes by faith from the burning ruins to the holy throne of God, he received a new perspective on the situation. He demonstrated that his confidence in God always flows from attention to God. That is why no matter our circumstances, how desperate a situation appears, we need not despair. We must look up and remember.

Listen as I read verses 12 through 17 again. This psalm's author knew from long ago, that his ancestors had found God faithful and that He could do the same in that moment. In fact, to help sheer up the people's confidence in God, he then recounted the saving works the Father had performed for the Israelites:

1. How God had orchestrated the exodus from the monster of Egypt,
2. How he had split the red sea for his forefathers so they could walk on dry ground
3. How God had provided water in the wilderness when there was none
4. How God had separated the waters of the Jordan River so the Israelites could enter the promised land, a river that never runs dry.

Verses 12 through 17 again.

<sup>12</sup> You, O God, are my king from ages past,  
bringing salvation to the earth.

<sup>13</sup> You split the sea by your strength  
and smashed the heads of the sea monsters.

<sup>14</sup> You crushed the heads of Leviathan  
and let the desert animals eat him.

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and you dried up rivers that never run dry.

<sup>16</sup> Both day and night belong to you;  
you made the starlight and the sun.

<sup>17</sup> You set the boundaries of the earth,  
and you made both summer and winter.

As I've heard it said, "Faith must have the last word, not sight." We cannot rely on what we see in a specific moment or situation or how we feel, but we must remember who God is and what He's done in ages or years or weeks and days past.

The psalmist was making a beautiful point. When the outlook is bleak, look up. And that's what I'd like to leave you with today, dear fellow shepherd leader. Whether you are a shepherd CEO, feeling alone in what seems like a hopeless situation, a shepherd parent at a loss for how to love and support your child or a shepherd supervisor who has tried everything known to you to help an employee perform, if you're situation seems desperate, look up and remember how has God displayed is faithfulness to you in the past? Write it down. Make a list of how you've seen His salvation in "ages past" and as, this psalmist did, trust the Father and make one last appeal.

In the psalmists' words, here was his appeal:

<sup>18</sup> "See how these enemies insult you, Lord,  
A foolish nation has dishonored your name.

<sup>19</sup> Don't let these wild beasts destroy your turtledoves.  
Don't forget your suffering people forever.

<sup>20</sup> Remember your covenant promises,  
for the land is full of darkness and violence!

<sup>21</sup> Don't let the downtrodden be humiliated again.  
Instead, let the poor and needy [which in this situation may be you] praise your name.

<sup>22</sup> Arise, O God, and defend your cause.  
Remember how these fools insult you all day long.

<sup>23</sup> Don't overlook what your enemies have said  
or their growing uproar."

I pray that *Psalms* 74 speaks to you today. And that as you provide what the sheep in your life need, protect them as you lead them well, and are present with them in the situations they face, I pray that in the midst of despair, you can look up and remember how faithful our God is and rely on Him and who He is and be encouraged in your shepherd leadership journey.

May you live deeply into your calling this week.