

Arise O God, Defend Your Cause

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Preacher: Ray Park

[0 : 0 0] I pray that you will bless our time in your word and bless our time of prayer and worship. We are privileged to come before you and thank you that we are accepted in Christ. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. All right, let's read Psalm 74.

Sorry, my internet's a slow. I got it. It's the old-fashioned book. One more chance. Yeah, okay. Thanks, Sean.

Yeah. Thanks. Oh, God, why do you cast us off forever? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture? Remember your congregation, which you have purchased of old, which you have redeemed to be the tribe of your heritage.

Remember Mount Zion, where you have dwelt. Direct your steps to the perpetual ruins. The enemy has destroyed everything in the sanctuary. Your foes have roared in the midst of your meeting place.

They set up their own signs for signs. They were like those who swing axes in a forest of trees. And all this carved wood they broke down with hatchets and hammers. They set your sanctuary on fire.

[1 : 0 9] They profaned the dwelling place of your name, bringing it down to the ground. They said to themselves, we will utterly subdue them. They burned all the meeting places of God in the land. We do not see our signs.

There is no longer any prophet. And there is none among us who knows how long. How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?

Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the fold of your garment and destroy them. Psalm 74. Yet God, my king, is from of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

You divide the sea by your might. You broke the heads of the sea monsters on the waters. You crushed the heads of Leviathan. You gave them as food for the creatures of the wilderness. You split open springs and brooks.

You dried up ever-flowing streams. Yours is the day. Yours also the night. You have established the heavenly lights and the sun. You have fixed all the boundaries of the earth. You have made summer and winter.

[2 : 0 8] Remember this, O Lord, how the enemy scoffs, and a foolish people reviles your name. Do not deliver the soul of your dove to the wild beasts. Do not forget the life of your poor forever. Have regard for the covenant, for the dark places of the land are full of the habitations of violence.

Let not the downtrodden turn back in shame. Let the poor and needy praise your name. Arise, O God. Defend your cause. Remember how the foolish scoff at you all the day.

Do not forget the clamor of your foes, the uproar of those who rise against you, which goes up continually. Thanks, Sean. So one thing I've learned in marriage, in being married to Carolyn specifically, is that she's an expert negotiator.

I told her I was going to talk about this. That's very short. So she's very good at understanding her desires. It's like a Venn diagram. And then another person's desires. And what's the overlap, right?

And then she can argue logically based on that position, right? So that makes me afraid for when Caladria's a teenager. But it's not always a bad thing, right?

[3 : 19] It's not always manipulative. Not saying that Carolyn is. But I bring that up because we see something similar here. When the psalmist is praying to God, he is using certain logic with God and God motivations in his prayer, right?

He needs God's help. But he doesn't just say, like, help me, God. But he says, because of who you are and because of these things that you care about, please help us, right?

So there are a couple points that I want to bring out of the psalm. One is how to pray prayers with God's motivations on our minds. And second is praying patiently in faith while waiting for God to move, right?

So two things to keep in mind. So let's take a closer look at this psalm as well as a few other examples of prayer in the Bible. In verse 1, the psalmist, he reveals that he feels that he and those around him have been rejected.

So in seeking to move God in prayer, he brings up a few points. One, God has a long relationship with Israel, right? God is theirs and they are God, so they belong to one another.

[4 : 30] Two, the devastation done by the enemy to God's sanctuary, right? It talks about the sanctuary being burned down. God should care about that. And three, the taunting words of the enemy.

So verse 22 says, remember the mocking from the foolish all the day. It's like, it's as if I were to challenge LeBron James to like a basketball game and like start taunting him.

Be like, I can dunk all over your face, right? Let's play one-on-one. And I feel like, you know, his kids at some point might be like, dad, you got to play this fool because like he's talking all this trash, right?

Like, because it's wrong that I would challenge LeBron James because he's so much better than me. So we see that in this psalm. There are a couple other places, well, many places where this comes up, but a couple others to point out in terms of examples of God-motivating prayer.

So there's one in Exodus 32, if you guys will turn there with me. So Exodus chapter 32. This is when the Israelites, after their amazing deliverance from Egypt by God's power, they make a golden calf, right?

[5 : 40] Very bad decision. So if you guys go down to verse 9, this is after the golden calf, and the Lord said to Moses, But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, O Lord, why did your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

Why should the Egyptians say, with evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven. And all this land that I promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.

And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. So what does Moses say here to motivate God? He brings up a couple points. One, he points out God's glory against the Egyptians.

He doesn't want the Egyptians to think God hated these people. He brought them out simply to kill them. So Moses is saying, don't let them think that. And another, he says, God, remember your promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[7 : 01] Remember what you swore and keep to your word. So he brings up these two things. Another example is in Daniel chapter 9. So if you guys can flip there.

In this chapter, Daniel is figuring out, as he reads God's word, about the return of the Israelites to the promised land. And so right now, the Israelites are scattered from the land because of their unfaithfulness to God.

And in chapter 9, verse 17, Daniel prays. Now, therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy and for your own sake, O Lord.

Make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy.

O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.

[8 : 15] So similarly, Daniel appeals to a couple things. He appeals to God's character. He points out that God is great in mercy, right? It's not because of good things that they've done, but because God himself is merciful.

So that's God's character. And another thing is, again, God's glory. He's saying, look, we, your people, bear your name. So because of that, because you're connected to us, hear us and save us.

So we still see those examples. Something to notice about all of these is they're God-motivating prayers, and though they align with what these people want, it is personal and communal blessing.

But it's not ultimately selfish, right? It's not self-centered, but it's other-centered and specifically God-centered, right? And again, with people, it can be manipulative, right?

If I were to say to Brian, like, Brian, you need a vacation. Like, let's go to Florida, right? It'd be so much fun. We can have so much fun on the beach and all this stuff, when, like, really, I just need a car.

[9 : 24] Like, I need his car, and I want him to drive, something like that, right? So it's not like that where I'm trying to get into his head. But here we see that these people really care about God, right?

They, the psalmist, he really cares that enemies are mocking him. He's like, that's wrong. They should not be doing that. Moses really cares about what the Egyptians would say about God, and it'd be wrong for them to think that God intended evil.

And then Daniel, he's confident in who God is when he appeals to his mercy, right? He says, I know you're merciful. So let's think about this for our lives.

A question of application is, what keeps you from caring about God and being motivated by his desires? Maybe it's a preoccupation with your own worries or your own desires.

It's hard to take our minds off of that. Maybe it's a lack of time, because it takes time to get to know people, right? To read God's word, to know who he is, what he's done.

[10 : 28] And I know for me, I could definitely spend more time understanding God's likes and dislikes. God's quality is God's goals. So that's one question.

Another question is, what are some things on God's heart that we can use as prayer points, right? So one thing that we saw is God's glory.

He's worthy that people know him, so we can pray for that. He's loving and forgiving. He gave his own son to die for us, and people should know him, right? God is who we need. Another is the end of sin.

God is sovereign over all creation. And the fact that this world has hurt and injustice. It has wickedness and rebellion. That there's malice and sickness.

These things should not exist with God in control. So we can pray for these things. And a last point of application, a final question.

[11 : 29] What can we pray about for Trinity, right? What are some things that we can push for on God's agenda based on who he is? So, I mean, just connected to what we just talked about, connected to the end of sin is asking for our sanctification, right?

We can say, God, you sent your son to die for us. Don't let that be in vain. Can you please make us pure because of what he's done for us? And connected to God's glory, we can pray that we would be an evangelistic church.

We would go out and share the gospel. Because there's a lot of people here, right? We can say, God, there's tons of people here in East Cambridge who don't know you. And that's wrong, right? So, that's on the point of praying God-motivating prayers.

And then finally, just a very smaller, much smaller point on continuing and not being discouraged in prayer. In this psalm, there's actually no deliverance, right? That we see here.

Psalmist just praying. He's asking God for help. But we don't see God moving. And so, I think that's a lesson for us that prayer is done in hope and faith, right?

[12 : 44] Even when things are hard, even when we don't see the results. So, let's continue to persevere in prayer as we seek to know and love God. Brian, could you lead us?

Any more?