

Week Six: *When The Church Is Failing?*

Psalm 74

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. Read Psalm 74. How would you describe the purpose of this prayer?
2. In regards to its structure, the psalm has two equal parts. The first 11 verses describe the problem, verse twelve is a declaration of faith, and then the last 11 verses are a plea for help. Do you think the author lacks faith in God's concern or ability to help?
3. According to the first verse, what does the author feel is the cause for the suffering of God's people?
4. Most believe this Psalm was written after the destruction of the temple and the exile of God's people to Babylon. Read Jeremiah 25:1-11. Why did God bring judgment on His people?
5. What happened at the end of seventy years? Read 1 Chronicles 36:20-23.
6. Why do you think God allowed the exile to last for seventy years?
7. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to accept the discipline of God and to be able to discern the purpose of His judgment.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

8. Before the exile, the chief sin of Israel was idolatry and the worship of false gods. After the exile, that was never again the primary failing of God's people. As best you can tell, what was Jesus' most common complaint against the religious leaders of His day? See Matthew 23 (Especially verses 1-7).
9. Have you ever heard of the terms "the visible church" and "the invisible church?" If not, try a quick Google search and describe the difference between the two concepts.
10. What's the difference between practicing religion and practicing the true Christian faith?
11. Read Hebrews 10:23-25. What's the value of Christians uniting in worship, fellowship and mission?

12. The Third Commandment is: “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (See Exodus 20:8-11). In your opinion, is it a sin not to worship? We know the law is established for our benefit and not our harm. Why does God place a high value on faithfulness in worship?
13. While there is much that can only be accomplished together, there are some aspects of worship that are intended to be done by each Christian in their day-to-day life. Read Romans 12:1 and describe what Paul meant by worship in that verse.
14. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray to be a blessing and not a hindrance to your congregation.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

15. The fault of the church in Psalm 74 was the worship of foreign gods. Do you think Christians today place other things above the worship of God? Explain.
16. The Christian church in America is in trouble. 80% of all American churches are stagnant or in decline. 4,000 churches will close for good this year. There are 33% fewer churches in America than in 1950, and 3,500 people leave the church every day. What’s wrong?
17. Some say the American church has turned inward and lost its way, and it is more interested in keeping its members happy than in obedience to the mission of God. Do you agree or disagree?
18. Do you feel your congregation pays too much attention to the demands of its members, or do your Christian leaders challenge you to faithfulness to the Lord and service to others?
19. Read Amos 8:11-12. Do you think that prophecy applies to America today?
20. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5. What did Paul predict would happen to churches in the last days? Is that the problem today?
21. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray a prayer of repentance for all the times you have complained that the church didn’t pay enough attention to your needs and priorities. Then ask God to help you to stay focused on the needs of others.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

22. Read Psalm 74. Despite the fact that God was intentionally frustrating His people for their unfaithfulness, what reason did David, the author (Psalmist) of Psalm 74, have for asking God to come to their rescue?

23. What reason(s) can we implore for God's favor despite the modern day church's problems?
24. As a parent (or the child of a parent), have you ever made your children sit in "time out" as a result of misbehavior? What do parents hope to accomplish by that form of discipline?
25. Do you think God puts us in time out? If so, for what purpose?
26. Look again at Psalm 74:9. What aspect of faith did the Psalmist notice was lacking in life? Do you still expect God to perform miracles, or do you tend to believe God doesn't work that way today? Explain.
27. If you examine your prayer life, what type of prayer dominates your worship? (Thanksgiving, intercession, repentance, request for personal blessings, wisdom, good health?) Would you consider your prayer life balanced?
28. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for a greater faith to believe and expect miracles in your life and in the life of the church.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

29. Read Psalm 74:4-8 and verses 10 & 23. What reason does David (the Psalmist) give to request God restore His favor on His people?
30. What reasons does David give in verses 2 & 20?
31. Notice that David takes time to recall the power of God as demonstrated in creation and times past. See Psalm 74:3-17. Would you say that you often, seldom or occasionally notice the power of God demonstrated in the world He has made? What most often captures your attention?
32. Are you of the opinion that Christian churches of different denominations who differ on matters of doctrine should do more or less to encourage each other?
33. When you think of the word church, do you think of your local congregation or the Christian Church as a whole? What do you believe is the chief cause of division in the greater Christian church, and what should be done about it?
34. Finish your FIFTEEN in prayer. Pray for greater unity in the body of Christ.