

**Prayer of Preparation:** Speak, Lord. Your servants are listening. *Amen.*

*How long, O LORD? Will you be angry forever?* This Sunday's psalm is full of lament...cries out to God about the condition the psalmist finds himself in. How long?

If you have never asked God, *"How long?"* I want you to consider yourself blessed...very blessed because few of us escape this world without asking God, *"How long?"*

*How long* is all about grief. *How long* is all about grief that has left us feeling as if God has either forgotten us or is angry with us. Let me assure you that God has never and will never forget about us so that question can be scratched off the list. The psalmist believes God is angry...not just with the psalmist but with *all of the Israelites*. How long will God be angry with Israel...how long will Israel suffer...how long will Israel cry...how long will Israel hurt...how long will Israel hurt themselves and others? Will God be angry with Israel forever?

I don't know what your situation was when you asked God, "how long?" but in the psalmist's case, it was all about how long the Israelites would be in captivity. Before you feel sorry for the Israelites, I want you to listen to the psalmist again with a fresh ear, *Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.*

The psalmist doesn't tell us what exactly happened, but he let's us know that at some point Israel had strayed from God. Knowing that they are in the wrong, the psalmist begs for compassion and tells God the time has come for Israel to be released from captivity because they were "low." The Israelites had come to the place where they believed their punishment was too much and had lasted too long. So, they ask God, *"How long?"*

This psalm leaves us with a lot of questions...here are a few: *Was God really angry? Was their sin the source of their disaster? Does it really matter now?*

Sometimes as Christians we believe that things happen to us because of our sins. I know some preachers will preach that certain illnesses are because of sins we, or our parents, committed. Or that children who are born differently abled because the parents have sinned. My least favorite? God must be angry at someone and that's why they died in a car accident. People believe and repeat that mess. Yes, I said that mess. I believe that whole line of thought is just a hot mess. I've spent a long time thinking about God, Jesus, and love...and giving people deadly illnesses, harming babies in the womb, and killing people is not love. Love builds us up; love doesn't break us down.

So, what was it? What's the problem...and does it still matter? *Is God angry?* No, I don't believe God was angry. I believe God was disappointed. You know the disappointment we feel when we raise our children to be God fearing, Jesus following people but they don't. I believe it's *that* kind of disappoint. The kind of disappointment when you've done the best you can with what you've got. The kind of disappointment where you've intervened in the lives of your children as much as you can and yet your children don't listen to you. The kind of disappointment where you just shake your head and think...when will they ever learn? God is not angry...but perhaps God is disappointed.

The Israelites had placed themselves in a situation where they weren't listening to God calling them to live in peace with each other and with the world. They Israelites were being human and in their humanity they fell. Their country fell. The nation was captured and at the time the psalmist was writing, they were in captivity. Human actions causing human consequences.

So there they were (and here we are)...being humans and doing all the human things and crying out to God...*“How long?”* Dare I say they were saying, *How long will we suffer the consequences of our actions? And, how long will we make others suffer the consequences of our actions?*

Here’s what the psalmist says in verse 9, *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us and forgive our sins, for your name's sake.*

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...even when we have sinned.

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...even when we cause our own trouble.

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...even when we won’t help ourselves.

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...even when we don’t love you.

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...even when we don’t love ourselves.

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...even when we don’t love our neighbors.

***For the glory of your name***...Help us...have compassion on us even when we don’t have compassion for others.

**Response to the Word:** *For the glory*...deliver us in Jesus name. ***Amen.***