

God Is Not Asleep!

Psalm 44

O God, we have heard with our ears,
our fathers have told us,
what deeds you performed in their days,
in the days of old:
you with your own hand drove out the nations,
but them you planted;
you afflicted the peoples,
but them you set free;
for not by their own sword did they win the land,
nor did their own arm save them,
but your right hand and your arm,
and the light of your face,
for you delighted in them.

You are my King, O God;
ordain salvation for Jacob!
Through you we push down our foes;
through your name we tread down those who rise up against us.
For not in my bow do I trust,
nor can my sword save me.
But you have saved us from our foes
and have put to shame those who hate us.
In God we have boasted continually,
and we will give thanks to your name forever. *Selah*

But you have rejected us and disgraced us
and have not gone out with our armies.
You have made us turn back from the foe,
and those who hate us have gotten spoil.
You have made us like sheep for slaughter
and have scattered us among the nations.
You have sold your people for a trifle,
demanding no high price for them.
You have made us the taunt of our neighbors,

the derision and scorn of those around us.
You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughingstock among the peoples.
All day long my disgrace is before me,
and shame has covered my face
at the sound of the taunter and reviler,
at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

All this has come upon us,
though we have not forgotten you,
and we have not been false to your covenant.
Our heart has not turned back,
nor have our steps departed from your way;
yet you have broken us in the place of jackals
and covered us with the shadow of death.
If we had forgotten the name of our God
or spread out our hands to a foreign god,
would not God discover this?
For he knows the secrets of the heart.
Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord?
Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!
Why do you hide your face?
Why do you forget our affliction and oppression?
For our soul is bowed down to the dust;
our belly clings to the ground.
Rise up; come to our help!
Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

The good ol' days! That's how this psalm begins, looking back to those days when God did so much for His people and took care of them. But oh, how things have changed! In the second half of this psalm, it seems as if God is now against them, or at least is sleeping and not paying attention. Wake up, God! Help us! Where are you when we need you?

Ever feel like that? You'd be unusual if you didn't! When your life seems to be falling apart, when troubles are closing in from every side, when it seems like the harder you try the deeper you get. You just feel like a sheep being walked to the slaughterhouse.

You know who else felt that way? The apostle Paul! Paul, the greatest persecutor of the church turned the church's greatest missionary. If God was going to take care of anybody, you'd think it would be Paul! But Paul was constantly under attack. He writes: *Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure* (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). Wow! Makes my problems seem not so bad . . .

So Paul quoted this psalm. It seemed to capture exactly what he was going through. He was that sheep being walked to the slaughterhouse. ***But surprise!*** Paul quotes this psalm not when he is at his lowest, but *in confidence* (Romans 8:35-39)! He says, yes, this is how we are, like sheep being led to the slaughter. But even so, I know that nothing can separate me from the love of Christ. Nothing! Anything this world can throw at me it threw at Him first. He took it all, was slaughtered on the cross, and came out alive in His resurrection. So bring it on! He is not sleeping, He rose from the sleep of death. He will never forget us for whom His hands still have those nail-sized holes. He does not reject us for our sin, He atoned for our sins on the cross. He is not selling us to the enemy, He bought us from the enemy (that is, redeemed us) with His own blood. And He is coming for us, now with His forgiveness and strength, and one day to take us to be with Him forever. Then all our troubles will be behind us. But not till then.

So for now? Yeah, life can get pretty tough. Satan can rage pretty hard. Sin can wreak havoc. We even let ourselves down. Some days are good and some days . . . not so much. But the God who worked in the past is the God who is working now and the God who is leading us into the future - to a glorious future with Him. We may not always see it. We may not always understand how or why things happen. And Satan will always try to convince you that God is against you. That you just aren't good enough for Him. Don't listen! That you aren't good enough is true - for all of us! But that's exactly why Jesus came - to be good for you, to forgive you and make you good in God's sight. So you can say with Saint Paul:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37b-39).

Lord Jesus, life can be so tough. You know that. For everything the world throws at me it threw at You first. That's why You came - to take all that, the sin of all the world, die for it, and then rise in victory. Give me that victory, O Jesus! Give me Your Spirit. Help me to trust and cling to You that when you come again, I will see how You did indeed work all things together for my good - even the tough times when I doubted You. For if You could even use a cross to work good, then I know that whatever I am going through, You can do the same. Thank You, Jesus. Thank you that because of You, nothing can separate me from Your love. Nothing! Amen.