

# A Time to Cry

by David Legge

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*The sermon 'A Time to Cry' calls on God's people to cry out to God in despair, acknowledging their spiritual lukewarmness and the absence of God's presence in their lives.*

**Duration:** 39:46

**Scripture:** Psalm 74:1-3, Psalm 74:9-10, Psalm 74:13, Psalm 74:19, Psalm 74:23, Matthew 11:12

**Topics:** "Spiritual Decline", "Divine Intervention"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker laments the current state of society, where the preaching of the word of God is disregarded and mocked. The speaker questions the absence of divine interventions and miracles in people's lives, as well as the lack of conviction of sin. The people feel abandoned by God and helpless against the advancing enemy. The speaker urges the audience to take action and not remain passive, emphasizing the need for God to vindicate Himself and restore His presence among His people.

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## Transcript

If you have a copy of the Word of God with you today, we're turning to Psalm 74 for a reading of the Word of God. I have been on these Lord's Day mornings taking you through a series on the Sermon on the Mount, but it is expedient at times as the Lord leads to interrupt certain series and deal with things that I believe the Spirit of God would lead me to deal with. This is a message that has been burning on my heart ever since in my own devotions and meditations at home before the Lord.

This psalm has been given to me and I felt led this morning to bring it to you and I want you please to listen to it in the light of that, in the light of the fact that it is the Word of God and in no more sense should you listen to this anymore than you should listen to everything that is preached from this booklet. But I do believe that God would hear us listen to him, see us listen to him and obey him from the words of this psalm. So please do ponder these things as I bring them to you from the Lord and as I bring them to my own heart and please do obey the Word of God as we hear it this morning.

First one, O God why hast thou cast us off forever? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? Remember thy congregation which thou hast purchased of old, the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed, this Mount Zion wherein thou hast dwelt. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy assemblies.

They set up their enzymes for signs. A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work whereof at once with axes and hammers.

They have cast fire into thy sanctuary. They have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. They said in their hearts, let us destroy them all together.

They have burned up all thy synagogues of God in the land. We see not our signs. There is no more any prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long.

O Lord, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom. For God is my King of all, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength.

Thou breakest the heads of the dragon in the waters. Thou breakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces and givest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood.

Thou dried up the mighty rivers. The day is thine. The night also is thine.

Thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth. Thou hast made summer and winter.

Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle dove unto the multitude of the wicked. Forget not the congregation of thy poor forever.

Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. O let not the oppressed return ashamed. Let the poor and needy praise thy name.

Arise, O God, plead thine own cause. Remember how the foolish man reproaches thee daily. Forget not the voice of thine enemies.

The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually. My message is entitled, A Time to Cry. A Time to Cry.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes chapter 3 and verse 4, there is a time to weep and there is a time to laugh. There is a time to mourn and there is a time to dance. In some quarters of the church there is a great emphasis today on laughing.

And on dancing. But today it seems that the church, God's people, sleep instead of weep. They are merry instead of mourning.

And I do not believe that the church today, especially in the West, is living in a day of laughter and in a day of rejoicing. They might feel themselves to be. They might have been spellbound like those in Galatians chapter 3 where Paul could say to them, who have bewitched you? Who have cast this spell, hypnotized you into believing something as it is not? I believe that for the child of God today, our day should be a day of weeping and a day of mourning.

I believe that it is a time to cry. In that psalm, God's children of old are standing as we have been learning on Monday nights in a wrecked Jerusalem, a bit like Jerusalem tonight. And there they are standing in the midst of a temple and all the rubble and all that a Babylonian empire has destroyed and wrecked in the

ruins of a devastated place where God used to be worshiped.

And there they are in a place destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. And the visible sign of God's presence, the visible sign of God's pleasure in his people has been wiped off the piece of the earth and they stand confused beside themselves at the end of their tether. They do not know what to do for as far as they can see God, the covenant God, has left his covenant people.

He has forsaken his covenant. That's why they cry in verse 1, Oh God, why hast thou cast us off forever? There is a despairing cry. God, it seems, is not among his people anymore.

The enemy is advancing and Satan's activity is more evident than God's is. That's what they are saying in verse 4 and 5. It talks about the enemy and how the enemy is in the very midst of God's temple in the dwelling place of God and the enemy seems to be able to do as he likes and the people of God are standing impotent and absolutely helpless as the enemy advances into God's territory. Now my question to us today and the message that burns upon my heart is this, is this not happening now? Is it not the case that it seems that Satan is more evident than God? Does it not seem that the presence of evil and the presence of the very devil himself can be witnessed more than the presence of almighty God? Our churches generally seem to be emptying.

Great Britain's heritage that once was glorious is being swamped by a sea of religious pluralism and ecumenism. Churches are being every year transformed into mosques, into carpet warehouses. Christian doctrines are being burnt to the ground to rubble and ruins.

So-called evangelicals are denying the reality of hell. You're just dead and done for. You don't live on.

You have not an immortal soul. Many of the preachers of the word of God are turning to immoral lifestyles. Some theologians are denying the truth of the virgin birth, original sin.

You're not born in sin. Some have even lifted up their voice to defy what God has revealed in a sovereign truth that the atoning work of Christ is the only way that any man or woman will get through the gates of heaven and have eternal life. Men and bishops and hierarchy in churches denying that the Lord Jesus Christ rose on the third day from the grave and was victorious over life and death.

They deny that he will come again. Where is the promise of his coming, they say? And churches and systems seem to be uniting together, even the Church of Rome, and they all seem to be opposing this doctrine that we hold so dear of justification by faith alone. Not by the labor of my hands could I fill God's laws demands.

Could my zeal, no respite, no. Could my tears forever flow. All for sin could not atone.

Thou must see. Thou alone. In the next couple of weeks, we face an impending general election, and there will most likely be a second term of a labor government that seeks to take all remembrance of God and dismantle it.

I don't know whether you see the future as bleak as I do, the possibility of it being bleak, but even among God's people, among that remnant that there are that still believe that the Bible is the word of God, that still believe in the fundamental doctrines of the faith, there is still a cause for despair. There is still a reason to cry, oh God, why hast thou cast us off forever? Why? One, because I believe there is a satisfaction with our spiritual lukewarmness. There is a satisfaction to stay the way we are at this moment, and if it goes

along like this for good, I'll be happy.

There is a desire in the high echelons of theological knowledge to wrangle over foolish questions and let the world go to hell. There is a willingness to have a one-night stand with the church without committing yourself to the vows of fellowship and putting your shoulder to pushing the wheel. There is a materialism that has made many spellbound and has muffled their ears to the call of Christ, take up your cross and follow me, deny yourself and follow me.

Him that loses his life shall find it, and him that saves his life shall lose it. And I feel, friends, that we would have to be blind if we cannot see that the presence and the power of God that was so often distinct in meetings even in this place and in the land of Ulster, God's power is absent. And in my life and in your life, there is a toleration of sin that too often causes us to fall.

The condition of the whole generally is too often the disposition of our hearts personally. And what is going on around us in the church and in our land just reflects what is coming out of our heart and the dedication and the commitment that we have to the Lord Jesus Christ. But my question is, as we look at the psalm, is do you see yourself standing in the rubble? Can you see this or is it just me? That it seems that God is not among his people at least in the way that he once was.

You find like many people I've spoken to even in this assembly that there is a dark cloud it seems hovering over us, shutting out the life of God's blessing and the light from shining in upon us and bringing life. I know, and I want you to beware, and I have to be absolutely honest at this because I hear sometimes people saying how well we're doing here. And I think we are doing well in comparison with some things that are going on in this nation at this time and some churches that are dwindling.

But I want you to be aware of that voice because I believe that voice is from the very depths of hell. Because such people who say those things are not listening to God's word. I want you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians 10 and I want this to settle this.

And I want no one ever in this assembly to take the attitude we're doing better than anybody else or we're doing as well as anyone else. Let's just be content. 2 Corinthians 10 and verse 12.

And Paul is speaking. He says, for we dare not make ourselves of the number or compare ourselves with some that command themselves. But they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise.

I would remind you of another verse of scripture in Corinthians. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Now, my friends, there are two things that I want to leave with you.

And I am asking you, is there in your heart, first of all, what was in the Psalmist's heart? And it is this, a cry of despair at the enemy's advances. Is there in your heart at this moment a cry of despair at the enemy's advances? He says, Lord, have you cast us off? Have you left us? Have you gone away from us? We sense the retraction, subtraction of your presence from among us. Things are not the way they used to be.

Spurgeon says, when a church is in a forsaken condition, it must not sit still in apathy, but turn to the hand that smiteth it and humbly inquire the reason why. Now, we believe in eternal security. Thank God for it.

And we believe that God can never cast his people off finally. And even when he does seem to cast us off, it is in his goodness to waken us up and to draw us back to himself. Now, there are three illustrations that

the Psalmist gives, at least in this Psalm, of how he is despairing at the enemy's advances.

The first is found in verse one. It is smoke damaged sheep. Smoke damaged sheep.

Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? And this is almost unthinkable. It is a mercy, even in this verse, that it is smoke. It's not fire.

It is smoke. In other words, the point is, the sign of God's anger is upon God's people. Literally, his wrath is not poured out upon them.

But this is the sign of God's anger. God is not smoking here against his enemy. God is smoking at his own sheep.

Does the children of God watch that smoke rising from the temple, rising from the ruins of Jerusalem? They begin to realize and correctly interpret it that God is angry with them. God is smoking against them. And what they are doing in verse one is, they are asking that God would remove all signs of his displeasure with them.

I believe that God's Holy Spirit is grief. And I believe that that is a serious thing. And I believe that's why we find ourselves under a cloud of smoke.

There are smoke-damaged sheep, and the second thing is a lion in the sanctuary. If you look at verse four, thine enemies roar in the midst of thy assemblies. They set up their enzymes for saying there is a lion.

And as the Babylonians come in and wrack Jerusalem, that is exactly what Satan wants to do with the church. Do you believe that? Do you believe that Satan is alive? Do you believe that Satan is real? Do you believe that Satan has a plan for your life to destroy it and to make you as unusable for God as possible? And Satan would seek to wreck the church and indeed wreck this church. And he has some of us personally between his teeth.

He is the one who walks about like a lion seeking whom he may devour. The psalmist says, thine enemies roar in the midst of thine assemblies. Where there was once the singing of angels, there is the roaring of beasts.

Where our forefathers once praised God, they now blaspheme his name. And the cleric and the theologian cry aloud in their denials of our Lord's blood and of his person. In verse four, we see it says they set up their enzymes for signs.

In other words, when they pulled that temple down, they took in their military and their pagan religious emblems and set them up in God's temple. What a picture of today. What a picture of this very moment where sins of every kind from sodomy to dead orthodoxy have been enshrined in the house of God and men and women in the world look at this and say this is Christianity.

The idolatry of Romanism has been embraced by the Protestant churches whose forefathers went to the flames rather than endorse such a transgression of God's first and second commandments. And this is the day that we're living in but it seems that God's people are anesthetized, desensitized and it's happening. In verse five, he depicts the evil one as them all, all their servants lifting up axes upon the thick trees and the picture is of a lumberjack in the forest furiously turning at each tree and knocking it down, destroying

everything in his sight and he is saying the enemies of God are destroying the beauties of the temple with the violence of a woodman.

Does that not seem like now to you? Does it not seem that everywhere we look something is being lost, that nothing is secret? We're no longer surprised when the next great warrior of God falls or another outright sin is made law from our government. It doesn't surprise us anymore when a fundamental doctrine of the word of God is diluted or utterly denied by those who take the name of Christ. It doesn't surprise us that today men are proud and destroying what their fathers were proud and erecting.

Gone are the days when men used to wield their axe against sturdy trees of error and false doctrine and heresy and they're turning it upon themselves in the church of Jesus Christ and selling as diligently they can the truth that their forefathers built. In verse 6, the psalmist described how the sledgehammer is smashing the word of God and the gospel of God while the church is asleep. Verse 8, he tells us that the evil one has extinguished that flame.

The evil one is destroying them all together. They have burned up all the assemblies of God in the land. Oh my friend, the Lord Jesus said that the gates of hell would not prevail against his church.

But that infers that the gates of hell seek to prevail against his church. Do we see that what the devil wants in Ulster, what the devil wants here in the iron hall is to extinguish the flame of the gospel and godliness and holiness. He has resorted again to his only and old plan.

Our government is doing it for him. Our monarchy has become the devil's lapdogs as they enshrine adultery, fornication, Islam. Oh there is a lion in God's sanctuary.

And thirdly, there's an extinction of prophets. If you look at verse 9, we see not our signs. There is no more any prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

There are no prophets of God. We see their signs. Their signs are going up in abundance, but we don't see God's signs.

We see the hostile signs of the Babylonian military. We see the signs of pagan religious ritual everywhere. But where are the signs of Jehovah? Where are his altars? Where are his sacrifices? They're nowhere to be seen.

Where are the miraculous interventions of God on our behalf, like the Red Sea, like the prophets of Baal? Where is our God who used to interject in our affairs to deliver us? He is conspicuously absent. Now listen, will we wait until there is no sign of God in Ulster at all before we do something? Are we going to wait? Just wait until all that we see is godlessness and pagan idolatry and apostate religion, and we who are the people of God, the salt of the earth, the light of the world, we are the ones who can make a change with our prayers and our lives and with the preaching of the word of God? Are we going to wait until there is nothing, only evil in this nation? The prophet's voice was silenced at this particular time, and you remember from our studies of Ezekiel that indeed Ezekiel was told, I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb and shalt not be to them a reprover, for they are a rebellious house. And the point here is that there was absolutely no one who knew how long this would go on.

There were no prophets to give the people of God guidance. There were no prophets to tell the people of God what to do. There was no one there to lead them, to guide them, to direct them and teach them.

Men of spiritual perception and discernment were extinct, and no wonder the psalmist in another place could cry, help, Lord, for the godly man seethest, for the faithful feel from among the children of men. There are no godly men left to guide, to direct. Ask yourself for one moment, I want you, see I'm trying to pull you from this era into now and see that we are in the midst of it.

Ask where is the Christian voice in our nation today? If you watch the television, you will see that it will, it has been relegated to a position of absolute insignificant ranting of idiots. It is scorned, it is laughed upon. Things that were once the very foundations that made this nation great are decried as humorous, and we may ask where are God's divine interventions in our lives? Where are the miraculous works of God among us? Where is the conviction of sin in the pew that weeps, that cries uncontrollably and shouts out in the midst of absolute anguish of sin upon them? What must I do to be saved? Where is it? Where are the godly men who can discern the need of the hour and lead the people of God to repentance and blessing? There is a famine in the land, oh that we would realize it, that we would realize there is a famine among the church, there is a famine among society, all of the institutions that we have held dear for years and years are crumbling under a foundation that is false because they are not built upon the word of God, and if the truth be told, our lives are not either.

There is a need for an awakening, and if you don't believe it, well then I will reserve you to absolute finishing in God's calendar and scheme. If you want to just go out in a breeze of unglory, if you just want to die and go to heaven empty-handed, well you do it, but we are all not going to do it. My friends, we need an awakening in Arnhull, we need an awakening in Ulster, for I believe it is our only hope.

You know that I read a great deal about the Isle of Lewis revival, and before the awakening that island was in dire straits spiritually, there was a great fear, but we, I believe, are a hundredfold worse. It was a place that at once experienced umpteen revivals and refreshings of the presence of the Lord through the Holy Spirit, but they had grown cold and indifferent, and in the view of that situation, the Free Church Presbytery of Lewis made a following declaration in the Stornoway Gazette and the West Coast Advisor, and they publicly expressed their deep concern. I want you to listen to this.

This is what they wrote in the press. The Presbytery of Lewis having taken into consideration, listen, the low state of vital religion within their own bounds and throughout the land generally, call upon their faithful people in all their congregations, listen, to take a serious view of the present dispensation of divine displeasure, not only in the chaotic conditions of international politics and morality, but also and especially in the lack of spiritual power from the gospel, and to realize that these things plainly indicate that the Most High has a controversy with the nation. The Presbytery goes on affectionately plead with their people, especially with the youth of the church, to take these matters to heart and to make serious inquiry as to what must be the end should there be no repentance.

They call upon every individual as before God to examine his or her life in the light of what responsibility pertains to us all, that happily in divine mercy we may be visited with a spirit of repentance and may turn again unto the Lord whom we have so grieved with our iniquities and our waywardness. Now my friend, they were nowhere near the state that our generation is in now, nowhere near, and it is for this reason I believe for us here it is time to seek the Lord. It is time to sow to yourselves righteousness, to reap in mercy, to break up the fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till he come and reign righteousness upon you.

I don't know about you, but I am tired of hypocrisy in my life. I am tired of powerless fruitlessness, and I believe it is time for me to seek the Lord. Is it not high time for us to take God's word seriously? Is it not high time to follow him fully? Will you come with me? You know there are some men in this assembly who have been exercised to have a day of prayer and fasting, and we're going to do it.

We're going to do it on the 10th of June, Sunday the 10th of June, and maybe it would be impossible for you to do that, and that's okay, you don't have to do it, but in our own personal homes and in our own lives we are going to fast, some of us, and you may join us on that date for the land, for our church, for our own individual families who are not saved, for our personal shortcomings and fallings, and maybe you can't fast for medical reasons. We'll have bread and water for the day or whatever you can have, but do something, and this church will be open, and if you can't get peace at home you can come here and pray, but my friends the cry of my heart is this, whatever we do we must not do nothing. What motivates such a thing? I'll tell you what motivates it, a cry of a desire that God would vindicate himself.

That's what it is. What you find in verses 9 to 23, look at verse 3, the psalmist says, lift up your feet, lift up your feet. You know what he's saying? Hurry up Lord, hurry up and come and examine this situation, this rubble that the enemy has left, come and see the desolation.

In other words, it's a bit like what David was saying to his brothers, is there not a cause? Is there not cause for us to get before our faces, before the living God, and fast and pray that he will bless us? Don't tell me there's not. The psalmist had a cry of desire that God would vindicate himself in activity. Look at verse 10 and 11.

Lord are you going to let these people blaspheme you forever? Oh isn't it wonderful? There's a hope in this, and I my heart overflows with a great hope, because I believe if we pray that God's going to do it. You know why? Because there is always a hope that God will come and avenge his dishonored name. There is always a hope that he will come when we cry, Lord where is your hand? Take it out of your bosom.

Let's see you move amongst us in our midst. Then we say to him, Lord it's going to go on like this unless you do something about it. Now my friend, whether we like it or not, I know that's not the way I pray.

You might say is that too forward? No it's not. The problem is we are too backward. We are too backward with God.

We need to say as a poet, why dost thou from the conflict stay, O Lord? Why do thy chariot wheels delay? Lift up thyself, hell's kingdom shake. Arm of the Lord, awake, awake. Cluck your hand of your bosom, Lord.

Work again amongst us, Lord. This is what we must have, fervent prayer. We need this.

This isn't an option for some spiritual few. We need it. We need to say as he said in verse 22.

Look at this. Arise, O God. Plead thine own cause.

In other words, Lord, in a day when there's no one to stand and fight your cause, you're going to have to fight your own. Oh, we need God to come through for us today. We need God to come and have a regard for his own glory.

We need God to respect his own honor. We need God again to come. We need to argue God into action prayerfully and from a position of trust.

As Christosom, the old church father said, we need to argue the mercy from God. Remember the widow who wearied the unjust judge? She pestered him and went everywhere after him and it annoyed him so much that he had to be pleased to give her what she wanted. And perhaps a better example would be the woman of Canaan and how she came persistent.

She nagged the Lord Jesus. She nagged the disciples. The disciples desired that she be dismissed but the Lord knew what was in her heart and let me tell you this old Augustine said and he was right.

She argued mercy right into Christ bosom. Of course, the mercy was there. Of course, his bosom's full of mercy but you think he gives mercy out willy-nilly? It had to be a heart that was willing to very plunge its spiritual hand into his bosom and get the mercy that was there and let me say there's mercy with the Lord for us.

There's blessing from the Lord for this place. There's blessing for your life but you've got to get it. For from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.

In other words, this blessing that we are seeking and we are going to seek is like a garrison kingdom and unless you're willing to climb the walls, unless you're willing to break through the bricks, you're not going to get it if you sit and watch television for the rest of your life and go to glory hobby. The psalmist found strength in knowing that God was a God of strength and oh that I might leave you on this note as we finish. He told God what God had done.

You think God needed reminded? Yes, he did. He needed reminded to know that his people hadn't forgotten who he was. He told them, Lord verse 13, thou divided the sea.

Thou art the God of creation. Thou art the one who divided the Red Sea and delivered us from Egypt and we need deliverance from the world now Lord and you can do that. You are the God who came and could overcome Leviathan, that great sea dinosaur, that sea creature.

You are the one who who could overwhelm what overwhelms man. That's what he said. Oh what what overwhelms you? What overwhelms you? What sin overwhelms you? What habit overwhelms you? Is there just this lethargy? I've lived through this lethargy that you can hardly pray, that you don't want to read the word of God.

You find you're continually falling into the same temptation. God can overwhelm what overwhelms you. Verse 15, you broke open the fountains at creation and the flood.

Verse 17, you set all the borders. What borders did God make? He separated day from night. He separated the sea from the land.

He separated summer from winter and autumn from spring. He even set national boundaries and you know what the word of God is saying. Whatever boundaries are limiting God in your life, he can smash them.

Hallelujah! There is hope but there is no hope if we will not believe God to do it again. Some of us are going for it. Will you be left behind? Let us bow our heads to pray.

Let me say this, that this portion of scripture has gone through my heart like a two-edged sword and I have had to uncover sins in my life that I did not want to and I'm still looking for victory to stay away from those things and I'm hoping that I can take the grace of God that he will give me and I am not reprimanding you, my friends. I am putting myself in the same boat and I have had to rededicate my life afresh to Christ. Now listen to me, I believe and I believe it's more than me believe that God wants blessing for this place and my friend it's going to take more than a Sunday morning and evening and I'm going to ask you to do something that we don't normally do here and that is if you are willing to covenant your prayers and your life for the prize of blessing in Arnhall, I want you to stand.

No one will be looking, all the eyes will be closed and we will pray together. Please stand. Father thou can see our hearts and Lord thou knowest whether we honour thee with our feet and not with our hearts but Lord even for those of us who are willing to be made willing help us to be what thou wouldst want us to be and Lord I confess my sin and we each confess our own sin for if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and make God a liar.

So Lord receive this offering and help us in the future days to be ready for thy blessing in Christ's name. Amen. We trust you've been blessed and challenged by the message you've just heard.

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