

Cast Off Forever?
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Psalm 74 is one of the last Psalms written, probably right around the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon around 586. Verse 1 reads, "O God, why do You cast us off forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?"

This is a beautifully sad verse - imagine that you are there, and Jerusalem has fallen, people are driven off into exile. It's horrible. You look back towards the temple, and where once there had been the smoke rising from the sacrifices and the incense, now there is the rising smoke of destruction and devastation. And there is utter mourning and pain.

However, the author is wrong.

He's expressing his true emotion, his true feeling, but he was wrong. Oh, it was a terrible day, but in no way, shape, or form had God cast His people off forever. They might even have deserved it - the Psalmist is being a bit romantic in how faithful the people were; Ezekiel and Jeremiah speak to how even idolatry was going on in the temple. This day of anger should have been obvious in its coming - but even then, it's not forever.

Consider - through the Babylonian exile, God ends up establishing communities of His people in both Babylon in the East and eventually in Alexandria and all throughout the Roman Empire. His Word spreads. The temple is rebuilt in due time, the captives return. Then around six centuries later, God Himself, Jesus Christ, walks into the temple and references destruction - tear down this temple and I will rebuild it in three days. There was no casting off forever; there was the LORD accomplishing and bringing about salvation in the midst of, over and against, and through sin and death - even His own death upon the Cross.

You most likely will have days that are lousy. You may in fact feel that you have been cast off forever by the LORD. And though your feelings, your emotions may be strong (brought on with good reason), they are not stronger than the Word of Christ Jesus. They are not more true than the Water attached to the Word in your Baptism. They are not more powerful than the Word of Resurrection that Christ Jesus shall proclaim to you come the last day.

In the moment, when we are awash in emotion, it's hard to see. It's hard for us to remember. But Jesus remembers you, and He understands, and He still works for your good, your forgiveness and your salvation. This is true however your week goes - so have a good one in Him!