

HOW LONG, OH LORD

Jeremiah 25:8-17

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

“You have established your people Israel as your very own forever . . .” 2 Samuel 7:24(a) NIV

As we sat in the ICU waiting area, anxious for any change in my husband’s condition, it didn’t take long for things to get on my nerves. Someone was rattling cellophane food wrappers; someone else smelled of cigarette smoke when he returned to the room; the scratching of someone’s pencil on a crossword puzzle sounded like fingernails on a chalkboard; the morning’s last cup of coffee tasted bitter and turned my stomach. “Please let me know what to expect,” I prayed. “Lord, how long can this last?” Like a toddler in time-out, I just wanted the waiting to be over.

The prophet Jeremiah was called by God nearly 350 years after King David praised Jehovah with the words quoted above. But in that time, the children of Israel – God’s very own forever – had repeatedly turned away from Him. After 23 years of calling them to repent, Jeremiah delivered the word of God: Israel would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians. Their one hope was that while the captivity would be complete, it would last only 70 years. Only 70 years? That is almost three generations – longer than most people’s life spans. It must have seemed to them that their punishment would last forever.

Time drags during periods of anxiety or anticipation. A five-minute time-out feels like forever to a preschooler. The last month of school seems interminable to both students and teachers. Mercifully, they know the end is in sight. Israel knew God’s punishment would be lifted after 70 years. We may all take comfort knowing we are his forever. And that’s much longer than 70 years.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, We are grateful that you love us and that you are slow to anger and quick to forgive when we fall short in obedience. We know that 1,000 years are only a minute in your sight. Help us to always look to you and to eternity in all that we say and do. Help us to extend that love and forgiveness to our brothers and sisters. Amen

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