

PSALM 129

Prayer for the Overthrow of Zion's Enemies.

INTRODUCTION.

- A. A Song of Ascents. "The Enemies Have Not Prevailed Against Us."
- B. Coffman quotes Ballard in the *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. IV, p. 647, for a setting for this psalm:
"This psalm is among the pilgrim songs, because many a Jew was depressed when he contemplated the long struggle of his people for survival in the midst of an unfriendly world; but in this psalm he turns the minds of his people toward the more cheering aspect of their history, that in that in spite of their foes, Israel had prevailed by God's grace and continue to live."
- C. Leupold divided the psalm into two divisions:
 - 1. The Enemy Has Not Prevailed (129:1-4).
 - 2. Zion's Enemies Shall Perish (129:5-8).

THE TEXT.

- 129:1** "Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,"
Let Israel now say,
2 "Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up;
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 "The plowers plowed upon my back;
They lengthened their furrows."
4 The LORD is righteous;
He has cut in two the cords of the wicked.
5 May all who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned backward;
6 Let them be like grass upon the housetops,
Which withers before it grows up;
7 With which the reaper does not fill his hand,
Or the binder of sheaves his bosom;
8 Nor do those who pass by say,
"The blessing of the LORD be upon you;
We bless you in the name of the LORD."

COMMENTS.

- A. The Enemy has not Prevailed.
Hundreds of years of Israel's history is condensed here in four verses. But the reference to their sufferings is hopeful in that confidence is expressed that "they have not prevailed against me." (v2).
[v1] "...they have afflicted me from my youth..." Israel's youth or period of "growing up" as a nation was in Egypt where they were severely afflicted.
[v3] "The plowers plowed on my back; they made their furrows long." This is often interpreted as long lashes from whips or rods. Sometimes they were corrected with the sword and captivity for their sins, but this seems to be more of a reference to persecution than punishment.
[v4] "The Lord is righteous..." The psalmist does not imply that the Lord was negligent in allowing them to suffer, but praises Him for deliverance. "...He cut in pieces the cords of the wicked." Whether the persecution is described as plowing their backs and cutting the cords refers to cutting the harness, or it is interpreted as scourging with whips and the whips are cut, it is still righteous on the part of the Lord.
- B. Zion's Enemies Shall Perish.
In verse 4 the psalmist has pronounced the Lord righteous in cutting the cords of the wicked who are persecuting Israel. The rest of the psalm is an imprecation or asking the Lord to punish the enemy according to that righteousness.

[v6,7] “Let them be as the grass on the housetops...” Coffman describes this: “The latter figure is taken from the custom in the Mid-East of covering the roof of the buildings with a thin layer of earth. This is done because of the insulation provided from the severe heat of that area. Of course, when a shower came, the grass at once sprang up; but, due to the shallow soil and the hot sun, it quickly withered without producing anything of value.”

The wicked are identified in verse 5 as ‘all those who hate Zion,’ and Kidner identifies Zion, not as just the capital city of Israel, but as the dwelling of God and representing his power. Therefore, this imprecation is not against those who just afflict Israel, but those who oppose God.

[v8] Not only were they to be put to shame, but those who passed by them were not to ask God’s blessings upon them, as was customary with typical Jewish greetings.