

Psalm 129 • The Lord who cuts the cords of my enemy

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Psalm 129 is the first one that we're going to be looking at here tonight. And I want to remind you that we are still in those first, well, not first, but those 15 Psalms that we call the Psalms of Ascent.

Do you remember that these were the Psalms that the Jews would traditionally recite and sing on their way to Jerusalem - as the pilgrims came from wherever they were living in - to Jerusalem during the feast times.

And Psalm 129 is a Psalm that is written to remember the many persecutions that have been endured over the years by the people of Israel but it also recollects His deliverance. And I want you to see that in this Psalm as well. These are...A lot of these Psalms are very short.

Verses 1 and 2. It says,

"Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth" —

let Israel now say—

"Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me." (ESV)

And you know those two verses alone right there are just incredible, in terms of what they express. I believe it's one of the greatest miracles of all time. And that is the staying power of the nation of Israel.

"Greatly have they afflicted me..., (he says) yet they have not prevailed..." And when we look at the history of Israel, I mean, they were born into captivity. Literally, the nation of Israel was born in Egypt. If you really... I mean, it was just a family that went there. And while they were there, they were born into a nation.

And after a period of time, they were enslaved by that nation. And they literally, had their inception in captivity. And then it just went from there.

And then throughout their history, it was one nation after the next conquering Israel, dominating Israel, enslaving Israel. The whole Book of Judges is all about nation after nation, that came to harass and conquer the nation of Israel. But every single time the Lord saw them through. And it's really incredible. And it's an incredible picture of God's hand in the nation of Israel.

People, no other nation in the history of the world has experienced what Israel has in terms of the level of persecution, the level of scattering, having their nation taken away.

Can you imagine a country coming here to the United States of America and literally, dominating us to the point where the United States of America was no longer the United States of America? It was just a plot of land that had been dominated by some other country. And they now had control. And it was...Cities were largely un-lived in. And farmland wasn't being farmed, and on, and on it goes.

That's what happened to Israel more than once. And yet the Lord always delivered them. And brought them back and then reestablished the nation of Israel.

We forget that just as recently as in the 1940s, Israel once again became a nation. Was declared again, a nation. After so many years of being not a nation. And they were reborn. It's really... It's really crazy!

The psalmist goes on in verse 3 to say,

"The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows."

That's obviously very poetic language. You and I wouldn't use that kind of language. The New Living Translation (NLT) renders it this way, *"My back is covered with cuts, as if a farmer had plowed long furrows."* And that's really what the psalmist is saying. I've been wounded and the enemies have literally trodden on my back. The enemies of Israel have come and have walked over our backs. And again, that's a picture of dominance. We've been dominated. We've been conquered over, and over, and over again.

But even so, the psalmist goes on to declare in verse 4, look at this,

"The LORD is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked."

In other words, the Lord has intervened. And that's what we see again, and again, and again. The Lord intervening in the history of Israel, delivering them from their enemies.

The last portion here of this Psalm is a prayer. It says,

"5 May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward!

6 Let them be like the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up,

7 with which the reaper does not fill his hand nor the binder of sheaves his arms,

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!""

And this last section of this Psalm is, essentially, a prayer about those who hate Zion. And it's simply praying, may they come to nothing. May they not be fruitful in any way. May they be like..., isn't that interesting? The grass, which is on the housetops.

If you have grass on your housetop, you probably have a really old house. We don't do that anymore. But the grass that they would put on their housetops, was that which has been cut out of the fields and would dry up. And of course, what was not alive.

And it's a prayer to say, may they be like that. May they be not alive, not fruitful, not able to receive a blessing in any way.

And so Psalm 129.