

Psalms of the Degrees (Psalms 120-134)
Celebrating Triumph Over Trouble Through Trust in God

Psalm 129 - Prevailing Through Persecution

- 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.”*

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Psalm 129 refers to the invasion of the Assyrians as the most recent of many cruel and relentless attacks against God’s people, and once again God delivered His people and judged their enemies. There are two striking similarities in the Psalm to the historical narrative. The prayer in Psalm 129: 5, *“May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward,”* corresponds to the historical record in 2 Chronicles 32: 21 which tells us the king of Assyria, *“...RETURNED IN SHAME to his own land.”* The prayer in Psalm 129: 6 that God would let Zion’s enemies *“be like grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up,”* corresponds to 2 Kings 19: 26 which says the Assyrians had made the nations they invaded *“LIKE GRASS SPROUTING ON THE ROOF, SCORCHED BEFORE IT GROWS UP.”* In Psalm 129 Hezekiah is asking God for poetic justice; for God to do to the Assyrians what they had done to others.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FOR TODAY

1. Reality of persecution: for followers of Christ persecution is **INEVITABLE** and **INESCAPABLE** (John 15: 18-20; 2 Timothy 3: 12-13).

2. Reason for persecution: there is no **JUST CAUSE** (John 15: 25).

- The Christian belief that there are **MORAL ABSOLUTES** rooted in God's character & revealed in God's Word for which all men are held accountable (1 Peter 4: 1-5).
- The truth Jesus is the **ONLY WAY** to heaven, which is the death blow to the autonomy of man since Christianity requires man to turn from going his own way and submit to Jesus as Lord (Matthew 10: 22a & 24-25).
- The godly **LIFESTYLE** & **WITNESS** of believers which serves as light exposing sin and pointing to Jesus (John 3: 19-21; Ephesians 5: 8-11)
- The believers' conviction that no earthly authority has the **RIGHT** to command what is contrary to God's laws and, if they do, it is the **DUTY** of Christians to disobey (Acts 5: 28-32).

3. Results of persecution: God uses the furrows plowed by our persecutors to **SOW SEEDS OF BLESSING** into the lives of His children.

- God uses persecution to strengthen the **FAITH** of His children

...at present you may be temporarily harassed by all kinds of trials. This is no accident--it happens to prove your faith, which is infinitely more valuable than gold, and gold, as you know...must be purified by fire.

1 Peter 1: 6-7 (Phillips)

- God uses persecution to refine the **CHARACTER** of His children.

...we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character...

Romans 5: 3-4

- God uses persecution to display the **WITNESS** of His children (2 Corinthians 4: 6-12).

4. Response to persecution: Pray for God to **DELIVER** the righteous and **JUDGE** the wicked (1 Peter 4: 19).