



PILGRIM SONGS:

✠ THE PSALMS OF ASCENT ✠



1 “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth”—let Israel now say
2 “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not
prevailed against me. 3 The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long
their furrows.” 4 The Lord is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.
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!”

-Psalm 129:1-8



Recap of Context: Psalms of Ascent

- These Psalms (120-134) were sang by Jews on their pilgrimages back to the temple in Jerusalem
- Three festivals they back to Jerusalem for annually: Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), & Feast of Booths



Why do we struggle with hard Texts?

Psalm 129 = imprecatory psalm = a psalm of curse

Examples:

- “Let death steal over them” -Ps. 55:15
- “Break the teeth in their mouths” -Ps. 58:6
- “Let them be blotted out of the book of the living” –Ps. 69:28
- “May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow” -Ps. 109:9
- “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock” -Ps. 137:9



Why do we struggle with hard Texts?

1. We're prone to have an incoherent view of Scripture.

- There is continuity & harmony between OT & NT
- NT accepts & affirms OT as fact & reliable.

2. We're prone to have a lopsided view of God

- You deny the essential unity of the Father & the Son when you believe it is solely the Father that is in view in the OT & solely the Son who is in view in the NT.
- When you do that you chalk God up to a deity who underwent a major personality change from the OT to NT.



Why do we struggle with hard Texts?

3. We're prone to have an anemic view of sin

- Our problem doesn't lie outside of ourselves, but rather stems from a depraved heart.

4. We're prone to have a deficient view of justice.

- A modern view of justice holds that the chief end of justice be rehabilitation instead of retribution which makes our feelings incompatible with God's wrath.

5. We're prone to misunderstand forgiveness.

- Biblical forgiveness is not an emotion. It's a conditional transaction requiring repentance & rest in Christ atoning sacrifice.



The Suffering of Abuse.

The Details of Israel's Suffering:

severe —> “greatly” x2

persistent = echoes the exodus

corporate = national suffering

1 “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth”—let Israel now say 2 “Greatly

personal = particular people

have they afflicted me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed against me.

ruthless = under the yoke of suffering

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

-Psalm 129:1-3



The Anticipation of Abuse.

righteous = continually faithful

How? Continually remembering His people

4 The Lord is righteous; he has cut the cords of the wicked.

-Psalm 129:4



The Curse in light of Abuse.

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

The greatest curse = the absence of the Lord's blessing upon you

nor do those who pass by say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you! We bless you in the name of the Lord!"

Author is saying I wish my enemies be like this grass. Once cut off they may prosper and be lifted up for a small season but ultimately they'll wither & rot like useless grass and never know "the blessing of the Lord".



I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. 7 But the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. 9 Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

-Isaiah 50:6-9



Our Hope in Abuse

- *Christ's plowed back frees us from the bondage of our past*

-Define yourself by how God defines you in Christ: Beloved.

- *Christ's plowed back enables us to crush bitterness & put to death hatred.*

-“Don't repay evil for evil.” -Rmns 12:17

- *Christ's plowed back compels us to offer conditional forgiveness.*

-Where there is repentance there is forgiveness; Where there is forgiveness there is restoration.

- *Christ's plowed back empowers us to wait for justice.*

-“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”

-Rmns. 12:19



“This psalm teaches, in the first place, that God subjects His Church to various troubles and afflictions to the end that He may better prove Himself Her Defender and Deliverer.

-John Calvin





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