

THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

JOURNEYING WITH JESUS
TO JERUSALEM

Part 9

“Psalm 129 & Jesus’ Deliverance of the Boy With an Unclean Spirit”

9 March 2025

Introduction: *Psalms & the Seasons of Life*

One of the wonderful things about the book of Psalms is the sheer variety of the kinds of psalms that it contains. These psalms reflect the various moods that believers experience as well as the seasons of life that we all experience. As a reflection of the book as a whole, the psalms of ascent also contain different kinds of psalms that give language to God’s people that we can refer to as we live as His worshipers amidst the varied experiences of life in a fallen world.

Key Point: The Lord knows the _____ of His people and hears their prayers and He will in His timing bring about our _____.

Psalm 129

The worshipers reflect on their past hardship the Lord has delivered them from and they pray for judgment to come upon those who make themselves the enemies of God and His people.

- **They lament the oppression they have experienced as a nation at the hands of their enemies but give thanks to the Lord for the deliverance He worked for them. (v. 1-4)**

Psa. 129:1-4—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. ”

⇒ What they have endured as a nation is personified as an _____ who has suffered greatly.

“afflicted”

OT Background:

“plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows”

⇒ In spite of these historic seasons of oppression, God’s people have been _____ because He is righteous.

“they have not prevailed”

“he has cut the cords of the wicked”

- **They pray for the vindication of the Lord in the ultimate defeat of their enemies. (v. 5-8).**

Psa. 129:5-8—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!”

⇒ They pray for their enemies to be _____.

“all who hate Zion”

⇒ Agricultural imagery is used in an ironic way as they pray for their enemies and their plans to _____ away.

“grass...which withers”

⇒ They pray for the _____ those who seek the destruction of His people.

Key Point: _____ is the means given to us by God whereby we can process our deep emotions in a way that is glorifying to Him and protective of us and our testimony.

“These psalms do not counsel a kind of “forgetting and moving on” that glosses over and buries the reality of violence, but rather brings the outrage to the surface. Second, and equally important, is that while these emotions are expressed, they are nevertheless processed in the context of prayer rather than in seeking personal vengeance.”
—Bradley C. Gregory, *The Theology & Spirituality of the Psalms of Ascents*

Gospel Parallel: “Jesus’ Healing of the Boy With an Unclean Spirit” — Matt. 17:14-20

Background: While the OT anticipated that political deliverance from their enemies would be an integral part of the work of Messiah, many in Jesus’ day understood that as the primary focus. Jesus ministry as Messiah, however, had a much broader scope.

1. **Coming down the mountain, a man in the crowd came and spoke to Him regarding his son.**

2. **The child had been under demonic possession from his childhood.**

“he suffers terribly...he falls into the fire...and water”

3. **The disciples had failed to rightly exercise the authority that had been given to them by Jesus.**

“O faithless & twisted generation”

4. **Jesus cast the demon out of the boy and he was healed.**

“rebuked”

5. **Jesus explained that His power and authority are accessed by His people through prayer and in dependence upon Him for the result.**

Key Point: God can and does intervene mercifully in our lives for His glory as we exercise dependent _____ in Him.

Concluding Thoughts

• **God’s intervention in our affliction can come in the form of _____.**

2 Cor. 1:3-4—³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

• **God’s intervention in our affliction can come in the form of _____.**

2 Cor. 1:9-10—⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

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Key Point: The Lord knows the afflictions of His people and hears their prayers and He will in His timing bring about our deliverance.

Psalm 129

The worshipers reflect on their past hardship the Lord has delivered them from and they pray for judgment to come upon those who make themselves the enemies of God and His people.

- **They lament the oppression they have experienced as a nation at the hands of their enemies but give thanks to the Lord for the deliverance He worked for them. (v. 1-4)**

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⇒ What they have endured as a nation is personified as an **individual** who has suffered greatly.

“afflicted”

OT Background:

“plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows”

⇒ In spite of these historic seasons of oppression, God’s people have been **vindicated** because He is righteous.

“they have not prevailed”

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- **They pray for the vindication of the Lord in the ultimate defeat of their enemies. (v. 5-8).**

Psa. 129:5-8—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!”

⇒ They pray for their enemies to be **defeated**.

“all who hate Zion”

⇒ Agricultural imagery is used in an ironic way as they pray for their enemies and their plans to **pass** away.

“grass...which withers”

⇒ They pray for the **rejection** those who seek the destruction of His people.

Key Point: Prayer is the means given to us by God whereby we can process our deep emotions in a way that is glorifying to Him and protective of us and our testimony.

“These psalms do not counsel a kind of “forgetting and moving on” that glosses over and buries the reality of violence, but rather bring the outrage to the surface. Second, and equally important, is that while these emotions are expressed, they are nevertheless processed in the context of prayer rather than in seeking personal vengeance.”
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Key Point: God can and does intervene mercifully in our lives for His glory as we exercise dependent faith in Him.

Concluding Thoughts

- God’s intervention in our affliction can come in the form of comfort.

2 Cor. 1:3-4—³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

- God’s intervention in our affliction can come in the form of deliverance.

2 Cor. 1:9-10—⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.