

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith

CXXIX: God's Restraint On His Peoples' Persecutors

(Psalm 129:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. 1 Peter 4:19 directs that believers who are persecuted for their Christian faith should entrust themselves unto a reliable Creator God to preserve their souls, hinting at God's provision to limit damages done by persecutors.
- B. Psalm 129:1-8 expands on this truth, and we view it for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. God's Restraint On His People's Persecutors, Psalm 129:1-8.

- A. The introductory remarks are part of verse one, so the numbering system in the Hebrew text matches that of the English Bible (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 1090). We thus stay with the English Bible's numbering system.
- B. We then translate Psalm 129:1-8 (as follows):
 1. "A song of ascents. 'They have greatly oppressed me from by youth,' let Israel now say," Psalm 129:1.
 2. "'They have greatly oppressed me from my youth, yet they have not prevailed over me.'" (Psalm 129:2)
 3. "'Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long,'" Psalm 129:3.
 4. "'Jahweh is righteous; He has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.'" (Psalm 129:4)
 5. "May all who hate Zion be put to shame and turned backward," Psalm 129:5.
 6. "May they be like the grass on the housetops (*gag*, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 150-151) which before it draws out the blade (*shalap*, *Ibid.*, p. 1025) dries up (*yabesh*, *Ibid.*, p. 386);" v. 6.
 7. "with it the reaper cannot fill his hands, nor the one who binds sheaves his arms," Psalm 129:7.
 8. "May those who pass by not say, 'The blessing of Jahweh be upon you; we bless you in the name of Jahweh,'" Psalm 129:7.
- C. We note significant observations regarding this psalm (as follows):
 1. The psalm utilizes the illustration of agricultural work where the plowman who plows the field is said to plow the back of the one he oppresses (v. 2-3), and the psalmist calls for the oppressors to be like unproductive grass that grows up on a rooftop only to wither for lack of soil and later summer moisture and dies in a futile lack of agricultural productivity, v. 6-7.
 2. The theme of the psalm is that of God's limiting the persecution and the effects of Israel's persecutions: though her oppressors had badly mistreated Israel, figuratively plowing her back with long, painful furrows, God is righteous and had cut his people free from the bonds of oppression of the wicked, v. 1-4.
 3. The psalmist thus called for all who hate Israel, personified in Zion, David's fortress city, to be put to shame and turned backward from their oppressive activities against Israel (v. 5). Indeed, the psalmist wished that the oppressors be like the grass that spouts on rooftops that withers and dies for a lack of soil and moisture in hot summer, grass no one reaps or binds into sheaves because it is so meager, v. 6-7.
 4. The psalmist called for a curse upon Israel's oppressors, that they would not enjoy the blessing of Jahweh in any way, and that no one else would respect them so as to wish them God's blessing, Psalm 129:8.

Lesson: (1) *Psalm 129:1-8 calls for Israel to trust in God Who LIMITED the oppression of those who hated the Hebrew people so that regardless how great had been their oppression, the Lord had delivered them from it, releasing them from bondage. The Abrahamic Covenant which God has yet to fulfill in its entirety is the stabilizing force behind this enduring hope of deliverance from foes, for that covenant speaks of God's blessing those who bless Abraham's seed and cursing those who curse it, Genesis 12:3. (2) Similarly, 1 Peter 4:19 calls believers in the Church era who face persecution for their faith to entrust their souls unto God as unto a Reliable Creator Who knows their human limitations under persecution, that He will provide room for them to fulfill God's assignments for them in their lives.*

Application: (1) *If we face hateful oppression for our faith, we should entrust God, the Reliable Creator Who made us and knows our human limitations to equip us to respond to the persecution in ways where we can still fulfill His assignments for us, 1 Peter 4:19. (2) We must always recall that God is righteous in contrast to the evil of our persecutors (Psalm 129:4), that He will EVENTUALLY punish the wicked and reward the righteous who are being persecuted, cf. Matthew 5:10-12. (3) If facing unjust persecution, (a) we should rejoice at being counted worthy of the Lord to suffer persecution for Him (cf. Acts 5:40-41) and (b) continue to serve the Lord in His assigned ministries for us (Acts 5:42 with 17-20).*