

## PSALMS: DIARIES OF GODLY OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

### Psalm One Hundred And Thirty-Seven - God's INDIRECT Approach To Turn The Really Wayward Around (Psalm 137:1-9)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Many times Christians express wonder of what it will take to turn a wayward associate around.
- B. Psalm 137:1-9 is a case in point of just **how** God often *accomplishes* this event in the **indirect** way. This psalm provides an invaluable directive for us to use regarding the issue (as follows):

#### II. God's INDIRECT Approach To Turn The Really Wayward Around, Psalm 137:1-9.

- A. This psalm recalls the debilitating oppression of Israel in the Babylonian Captivity, Psalm 137:1-3:
  - 1. The "rivers" of Babylon in verse one refer to the "Euphrates and its tributaries, the Chebar (Ezek. 1:1), and numerous canals of the area" according to the Ryrie Study Bible: KJV, fn. to Ps. 137:1.
  - 2. At this location the people of Israel referred to their "captors", obviously picturing the Babylonian Captivity as Israel was captive as a people in this location only during that event.
  - 3. The people had experienced the traumas of war and captivity that had put them into shock:
    - a. The psalmist recalled the "relative nation" of Edom, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, in their unsupportive encouragement of the Babylonians to tear down Jerusalem to its foundations, 137:7.
    - b. Israel had seen its infants torn from their mothers' arms and killed by having their heads dashed against the rocks as the soldiers slung these babies by the feet to slaughter them, Ps. 137:8c-9.
  - 4. Israel was further tormented by her captors in their taunting the captive people of God to sing their worship songs of Mount Zion, Ps. 137:3. This was equivalent to mocking Israel's faith in God as these pagan captors were trying to assert Israel's God was impotent in not being able to save the nation.
  - 5. Under these conditions, the taunting had an effect: the people of Israel could only hang their harps upon the poplars in the midst of Babylon, thereby signifying their depression and loss of joy, Ps. 137:2.
- B. **However**, this tragic experience led to a **positive effect** in turning wayward Israel around, Ps. 137:4-7:
  - 1. According to 2 Chronicles 36:15-21, due to Israel's repeated efforts to oppose the warnings of God's prophets, the whole tragedy of the Babylonian invasion had come to pass!
  - 2. Well, **in** that *captivity*, the psalmist records Israel's first tendencies to **turn BACK to God** as follows:
    - a. Israel's **revulsion** of what her *captors* had so viciously **done** to her motivated her to view as **valuable whatever** her *captors* mocked or had abused regarding herself as a nation!
    - b. Specifically, what Israel's enemies had abused or mocked were Israel's beloved *infants* (137:9), her capitol city of **Jerusalem** (137:7) and *Zion's praises of Jahweh* (137:2-3).
    - c. Of significance is the fact that Israel had **notably SINNED** in these **very** issues, and thereby had incurred God's wrath: (a) Israel's turn to idolatry had led to **her** viciously sacrificing her **own** infants to the flames, cf. 2 Kings 16:3 NIV. (b) Out of fear that his subjects would return to his rival king in Judah where Jerusalem was, Jeroboam set up false worship in the North, cf. 1 Kings 12:26-30. All of the kings of Israel afterward followed this practice! Finally, the kings of Judaea started allowing rival worship centers that dissuaded the people from attending Jerusalem's temple opposite God's will, cf. 2 Kings 12:2-3. (c) The people turned to false gods opposite Jahweh, cf. Ezek. 8:16.
    - d. Nevertheless, since Israel's captors had attacked her infants, her city of Jerusalem and her temple worship of Jahweh, these items were held as invaluable to the captives in Israel: (a) the captive people spoke endearingly of Jerusalem (137:5-7), of Jahweh worship (137:4) and her infants (137:9).
    - e. **Thus, God used Israel's captors in an indirect way to turn her around from her apostasy!**

**Lesson:** *God may INDIRECTLY use intense, unjust suffering to refine people out of waywardness!*

**Application:** *(1) If a wayward associate faces intense oppression, we can view it as an opportunity for God INDIRECTLY to impress him to repent, cf. Rom. 11:11-12! (2) If WE face great oppression, (a) we should examine OURSELVES to see if we have sinned, and repent if necessary. (b) Yet, at times we may be BLINDED to our own needs that God must allow oppression to come to cause us to REPENT in an INDIRECT way (Rev. 3:17-18)! Thus if we face intense oppression, and can NOT see WHY, we should adopt a LEARNER'S attitude to make the most of the whole experience!*