



GROWING UP IN GOD  
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

Session 10 October 2011

Psalm 129

Prayer for the Overthrow of Zion's Enemies.

A Song of Ascents

- <sup>1</sup> "Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up,"  
Let Israel now say,
- <sup>2</sup> "Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up;  
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
- <sup>3</sup> "The ploughers ploughed upon my back;  
They lengthened their furrows."
- <sup>4</sup> The LORD is righteous;  
He has cut in two the cords of the wicked.
- <sup>5</sup> May all who hate Zion  
Be put to shame and turned backward;
- <sup>6</sup> Let them be like grass upon the housetops,  
Which withers before it grows up;
- <sup>7</sup> With which the reaper does not fill his hand,  
Or the binder of sheaves his bosom;
- <sup>8</sup> Nor do those who pass by say,  
"The blessing of the LORD be upon you;  
We bless you in the name of the LORD."

You could subtitle this psalm '*get 'em Lord and get 'em quick...*' as there is one verse in it that seethes and pulsates with anger – hear it in the Message -

**Psalm 129: 5 The Message:**

<sup>5</sup>*Oh, let all those who hate Zion grovel in humiliation;*

A sense of wrong has been festering – resentment has accumulated over the years, the psalmist wants vengeance and vindication...so he is blowing his top, both at the history of Israel and his own situation.

*'Here's the microphone pal, let's hear it like it is...'*

That's fine, just as long as it is only the Father who gets the earful, the burden of what you need to express – it really is OK to let God know, even though He knows already...take a quick look through the psalms some time and see how David and others expressed their anger and frustration, tears, fears and pain **before God**.

The important thing is that it is **before Him** that it is spilt and **left**, not before people - *'you can destroy with your character in five minutes something you have taken five years to build with your gift'* – so said Smith Wigglesworth a man mightily used of God in evangelism, healing and prophecy last century.

Giving vent to your feelings, exploding with anger, is how marriages are shipwrecked, relationships are broken, and children become estranged from their parents...giving vent, a *'piece of my mind'*...a hollow victory...

To respond or react aaah, **that** is the question...

So here we find the psalmist, still climbing, reflecting on past persecutions of his nation, and himself – his anger kindles - he indulges in an imaginary conversation and he spits out –

<sup>5</sup>*May all who hate Zion  
Be put to shame and turned backward;  
<sup>6</sup>Let them be like grass upon the housetops,  
Which withers before it grows up;*

Tasty bit of cursing, very satisfying! Who hasn't played out imaginary conversations – and won!

For us this is counter-productive for our growth and elevation in the Spirit; replaying negative scenarios is never good; indulging in being present past rather than present future and feeding our anger embitters our souls; the 'feel-good' factor of the imagined victory doesn't last long and we are left with a bad taste in our mouths because we have just killed off some choice fruit of the Spirit...

We are defined spiritually, not so much by what happens to us, by what people say or do to us, or by our circumstances, as by our reactions or responses.

How **we choose** to show up.

The spirit of Cain or the spirit of Abel...age old conflict...accusation or intercession – we will come down on one side or the other, we will bless or we will curse when the going gets tough...

## Luke 6:27 NASB

<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."

Persecution, pain and difficulty are part of our journey; what determines our growth is our choices – attitude determines altitude they say...an attitude that blesses, keeps no record of wrong suffered and takes every opportunity to release a benediction into the lives of others will see swift upward progress...

Pain, difficulty and persecution are all part of the journey.

We all go through it...no-one likes to suffer, I certainly don't, but in the suffering and difficulty, there is something to be had, something to be gained; the fruit of the Spirit only grows in bad soil...it is easy to bless others when they are agreeing with you, but when they turn and rend you...blessing comes hard and the habit of cursing slips easily off the tongue and occupies the mind...

We can **go** through our difficulties or **grow** through them...the choice is ours. Trouble is, if you don't grow through, you will have to go through – continuously. You will have to keep *going* through the same situation, until you *grow*...how many situations are *you* are in right now which are repeats with different players? Or even the same players...

Just a thought...

We can adopt the mindset of using every setback and difficulty as a stepping stone, a platform for a higher, deeper walk with God Himself, the God who delights in us and delights to reveal Himself to us and **give** Himself to us...

We have a choice, we can partner with Him...or not.

No doubt about it, there **are** giants in the Promised Land, but there are grapes to be had too...and in the realm of the deeper life there is suffering of one kind or another...

When God pours out His Spirit...He comes like rain on dry ground – *lovely*...we bask in the enjoyment and refreshing – but the **purpose** is to soften the soil of our hearts in order that He may plough it...The way **must** be made for the entrance of the seed, which must fall into the ground and die in order to bring forth a harvest; we need both the former and the latter rains...the first to open the soil, the second to mature the harvest which is the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

And God is agricultural, He can wait for the harvest – He doesn't measure time, He measures growth...

To respond or react - strangely, we will find that this will prove to be one of the hardest and longest lessons we will learn on our climb - to respond, not to react – learning to rule our own spirit: the first requires **self**-control; the second reveals **lack** of control...

## Proverbs 16:32 NASB

<sup>32</sup>*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.'*

Hmmmm....

**Self**-control is the only form of control acceptable in the body of Christ.

Becoming a Christian, then, we find as we climb, is not an inoculation against trouble; in fact you may find more than you experienced before – the unpalatable truth is that the church has always been built on the blood of the martyrs...for most of us though, it is death by instalments...slow, and sometimes, very painful.

When you are under the dealings of God, please do not expect to get a fair hearing or a fair deal – rejection, misunderstanding and injustice are part of the package - the servant is not greater than his Master – people may lie about you, speak against you, take you to court...when it happens, not if it happens, please don't say '*Why did God allow this?*' Beloved, He purposed it...try to understand how He does things –

**Psalm 25:4 NASB and The Message:**

<sup>4</sup> *Make me know Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths.'* '*Show me how you work God, school me in your ways.'*

Notice that in the psalm we are looking at verses one and two show there *is* suffering, but no distress, if you suffer but don't understand, there *is* distress; once understanding comes you can **embrace** and even **enjoy**, and **rejoice** in what is happening – you have an '*Ahaah*' moment....revelation can be retrospective (*not recommended*) or progressive...

So we begin to ask questions and our prayers change –

- Am I reaping what I have sown?
- Is this You?
- Is this the cross at work?
- Is this the devil?
- Am I training for reigning?

*'Teach me Your ways O Lord...lead me in a plain path'*

Sometimes it is a mixture of all of these and my prayer has to be '*deal with me severely and correct me ruthlessly...*' paraphrased: '*hit me real hard Father, kill me off, I want to **grow** through this not just **go** through it.'*

But sometimes it is not about correction; the Holy Spirit trying to get our attention regarding what He wants to **be** for us next...what upgrade in our relationship with Him, what **gift** of Himself He desires to bestow on us; what attribute of the nature of Christ He wants to give us next...we are

repenting until we can't spell the word, and all the time He's grinning and holding something precious out to us...

Hmmmmmm...

That puts a different complexion on it...*bring it on!*

We can measure our progress by the fact that we are beginning to interact and converse with the Holy Spirit at such times and ask questions, rather than screaming 'I'm a Christian, get me out of here!'

He isn't going to do that, He's spent a lot of time and trouble bringing you to this place so He can make you more like Jesus...isn't that what you want most of all, to bear the likeness of Him?

One of the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering - with joy – face it beloved, things may go on for years without any material change – **longsuffering** with **joy**; **learn** to be joyful – what if that is what He is trying to give you right now –

#### **John 15:11 NLT**

*<sup>41</sup>I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!*

Joy, in spite of circumstances, people, things and worry.\*

We **learn** to respond in the opposite spirit, we **learn** to love as He loves because He first loved us...everything is possible, everything is do-able, everything is profitable, hear Paul -

#### **Philippians 4:11 NIV**

*<sup>41</sup>I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.'*

So don't run, don't crack up, crack on...

Being a Christian is not for wimps; it is not about triumphalism; it's not about living 'the good life'; sometimes it is just about patient endurance in the face of unchanging circumstances and difficulties; faithfulness in the face of defeat, because He Who calls us, is faithful.

The events in David's life were not due to his lack of faith, quite the opposite; they were due to his great faithfulness to the call of God on his life; his security in Who God was – for him – even if he messed up, which he did from time to time...big time...Bathsheba, Uriah the Hittite...lust and murder...But God looks on the heart and in David He saw a man incredibly described as '*after His own heart*'.

It was David's carnality, his fleshly appetites that tripped him up...but his heart was steadfast, it was faithful to the Faithful One in Whom he trusted.

Faithfulness, you know, may keep you in obscurity where only God sees what you do...so don't join for the publicity and the glory...

Sometimes it all boils down to how determined you are to keep following where Jesus leads; sometimes it is just about being the last one left standing...

Faithfulness is what God looks for.

This psalm reflects the psalmist's **exultation** in his knowledge of the keeping power of God, His protection over Zion, the City of God, in spite of those who had persistently come against it; no-one who comes against Israel lasts very long. When God had used them for His purposes...He destroyed them – He simply used the wickedness already in their heart...the Bible is littered with nations who no longer exist -

### **Isaiah 10:12 NASB**

*<sup>42</sup>So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness."*

God has His own ways of paying debts...

For us then, we are reaching the stage in our journey when God begins to deal with our attitudes towards those who oppose us and spitefully use us – what will we do when the heat is on, what rejoinder is going to well up from our hearts...

*'I've got something I want to say to you too, pal...!'*

There are times when we can hear ourselves and others around us shouting **'I'm only human!'** The pressure of circumstances, people, things and worry get to us...and something, as the song says, has got to give...

We get angry and hold a grudge, worse, we move into a simmering resentment and growing bitterness of soul which clouds our judgement of every situation and calls into question the motives of everyone around us...we become isolated in our own self-righteousness, frustration and anger – we call for God to do something and do it now – *'God knows my heart'* – in parenthesis *'and He agrees with me...'*

*'Vengeance Father, look what they are doing to me...'*

It is at this point that we learn another big lesson - when God comes in answer to our prayer, He doesn't come to take sides, He comes to take over...

### **Joshua 5:14 NASB**

*<sup>14</sup> He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?"*

Now there's a correct response.

But this, is not what we wanted right now, we wanted His **agreement** with how we feel, we want Him to come in and cut them in half, we're speaking vindictiveness and vengeance – He's speaking – love and blessing...He's come in all right – but He's not taking revenge on **them**...He wants to change **me!**

Ouch!

Jonah had the same problem – 'kill 'em Lord, at least maim them a little!!'

#### **Jonah 4:4 NASB**

*<sup>4</sup>The LORD said, "Do you have good reason to be angry?"*

What a question!

*'Ummm....no Lord...'* the fear of the Lord is just the beginning of wisdom...

I well remember my 'Jonah' period; it went on for quite a long time while I kicked and struggled, until I realised **who** God, smilingly, was getting at...

The psalmist knew too, he knew -

#### **Leviticus 19:17 – 18 NKJV**

*<sup>17</sup> 'You shall not hate your brother **in your heart**. You shall surely rebuke your neighbour, and not bear sin because of him. <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.'*

That'll be the one.

It is obvious that these psalms were not sung by the Association of Perfect Pilgrims Choir, they were sung by ordinary people like us, who by **faith** and **patience** inherited the promises, faith and patience, and add to that **fortitude** – strength and endurance in a difficult or painful situation.

Those 'p' words – persecution, patience, perseverance...perseverance is not just hanging on, but **thriving** in the face of difficulty, endurance is not just patience with gritted teeth, but going from strength to strength with joy; using what comes against us to strengthen our resolve - and our character -

#### **Psalm 84:5 – 7 NIV**

*<sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.*

<sup>6</sup> *As they pass through the Valley of Baka,  
they make it a place of springs;  
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.*  
<sup>7</sup> *They go from strength to strength,  
till each appears before God in Zion.*

God never denies the possibility of suffering, but He does promise a harvest from pain and difficulty.

What we often experience is the age old struggle between the human and the Divine, we **fight** what God is trying to achieve in us...we are hard up against the fact that –

#### **Isaiah 55:8 NASB**

*“My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,”*

Humility says at this point - *‘Teach me Your ways, Father...’*

And we are learning that we cannot bind the cross we can only embrace it.

When the cross really gets to work in you it will leave nothing alive, because to do so would have it sprout again...so it's death - by instalments.

In these times we learn to take it all to Him, to go to the Throne and not the 'phone and pour out our hearts before **Him** – then we let Him flip the scenario over and tell us how He sees both it and us...we let Him show us which piece of the character of Jesus is missing in our lives right now, the area He want to kiss and bless next...

#### **Matthew 5:44 NASB**

*‘But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you’*

#### **What?**

It really does take us a long time to recognise that we only have **one** enemy - the enemy himself, people are not our enemies and Satan cannot be bigger to us than we are to ourselves; all he ever does is use what we give him...

That is an unpalatable truth, right there – what are **you** giving him right now?

What bitterness, resentment, unforgiveness – *‘I can forgive, but I can't forget’* – beloved, you haven't forgiven...what grudge are you holding that is holding you, twisting you up on the inside, holding you back...making you sick in mind and body?

It is the ground that **we** give him that he will use - that rat feeds on the garbage in our minds, the rubbish we give him...



So if you give him the ground, the garbage, of **your** grudges, bitterness, resentment and hatred, he's going to use it and you, beloved, may find yourself physically or mentally ill as a result, eaten up by that which is eating you...

Suddenly this pilgrimage isn't so much fun; the camaraderie stops as each one of us examinations our ways before God – *'Am I reaping something here?'* *'Are You reaping something in my life'*, *'Is this the cross..?'*

All of those, it's just part of growing up; we have to face what we are not; because God is planning something for our good, for our profit – right there, right in that spot where we cannot stomach ourselves, where all our fears, unbelief and yuck have just been exposed...He is planning to give us the character and nature of Jesus...He is planning to both kiss **and** bless that part of your life which the enemy has just revealed...that is his job, to pinpoint the area God wants to bless next in your life.

God is a God of blessing and comfort...

In his grace and mercy, Father shows us **His** heart – often in hindsight, retrospective revelation – for the people and situations in which we found ourselves in the past. This causes us to repent, change our minds, have another thought and in so doing, softens our hearts.

In our journey, as we begin to grow up in Him, anything that will kill us, He will kill; that's kindness; that's why the 'flesh' has to go...if we don't put it to death, it will kill us – we couldn't take these truths when we were babes, but now we are growing up and on and He can begin to reveal to us His plan for our lives...

Similar to other times in our climb, maybe now is a good point to just take a break and do a little healthy self-examination; don't do it alone, ask the Holy Spirit to show you what your trials have been about; what it is that He has been working in and through you, and what He is trying to do right now – remember, He can't do through you what He hasn't been able to do in you - it will help you as you embark on the next stage of your ascent...that is, if you are still up for the climb...

*'The Christian life is the ultimate quest and the greatest adventure that we can experience in this life. The noblest cause and the greatest purpose that anyone can have is to serve the King of kings...'<sup>1</sup>*

#### **A prayer:**

*Father,*

*Thank You for showing me where I am not like Your Son, thank You that you are going to make me into His image. I have decided I want to co-operate with all that the blessed Holy Spirit is doing in me, to this end - I declare I am going to become the exact opposite of what I am right now; I am going to be changed into a different man and a different woman.*

*Thank You Holy Spirit of Jesus, you are the author and finisher my faith – I am not going to be stuck in this place or in these circumstances, I am going to rise up to a completely new place of blessing, power and significance, where I am not subject to my circumstances, but my circumstances are subject to me.*

*So I ask You to move me in my thinking Father, soften my heart, touch me by Your Spirit.*

*For Jesus sake and in His name. Amen.*

God bless you, I do hope you will decide to continue on the upward call as we look at Psalm 130 next month.

**Beryl M**

\*I recommend the teaching on the little letter to the Philippians on this subject which is entitled ***‘Walking the talk’*** – you can find it on our website [www.psalms131.com](http://www.psalms131.com) freely available for downloading.

<sup>1</sup> Rick Joyner, ‘A Message to the Glorious Church’ a study on Ephesians part 1.

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