

Psalm 129- The Plea of Suffering Israel:- Although this is primarily a lament of the community of Israel, there are elements of confidence and trust – verses 4 and 5.

Verses 1 – 4 – Israel’s past afflictions:- The long history of Israel’s troubles is compressed by the Psalmist into these three verses. From the time of the Exodus onwards (Israel’s ‘youth’), the nation had suffered severe affliction from numerous foes. There are two metaphors used to describe this affliction. The marks of whips on the back are likened to ploughed furrows. The binding cords of their opponents are described as the ropes used to harness oxen.

Verses 5 – 8 - Israel’s future hope:- An imprecation on all who hate Zion! The speaker expresses the desire that the enemy may be put to shame and turned homeward. (For an example read 2 Kings chapter 7). There follows a long simile to request that the evil plans of the enemy may be thwarted. The grass which grew on the earth rooftops dried up on withered in the summer heat because it had no depth of root. It was not worth cutting for fodder or bedding. It was not even worth the customary greeting of those passing by.

Psalm 130 – The Redeemer of the Pilgrims:- This is a personal plea for forgiveness. However, since the Psalmist troubles and despair were shared by the Nation of Israel this Psalm would be appropriate for use by the bands of foot pilgrims on their journey to the city of Jerusalem.

Verses 1 – 2 – The Cry of the Penitent:- “*Out of the depths I cry . . .*” Note that this is in the present tense. The speaker is expressing the depths of his feelings knowing that the Lord requires honesty. The instinct that makes us answer the question ‘how are you?’ with ‘Fine thank you!’ when the truth is you feel otherwise, does not work with the Lord God. He requires “*truth in the inward being;*” (Psalm 51, verse 6).

Verses 3 -4 – The Assurance of Forgiveness:- The universality of sin is recognised. The only hope comes in God’s forgiveness, which in turn brings the feeling of awe in the forgiven sinner.

Verses 5 – 6 – The Expectancy in Hope:- The repetition of the phrases emphasises the sinners sense of expectancy. His whole being (his soul) is engaged in diligent waiting. He waits for the Lord even as the sentinel on the walls waits for the relief of morning change of watch.

Verses 7 – 8 – The Application to Israel:- The Psalmist’s thoughts turn to others who to to share his confidence. Because of the promise of the loving-kindness of the Lord he can assert that God “*will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*”

As we pray for personal forgiveness let us remember those who carry heavy inner burdens. As we find forgiveness and assurance through the sacrifice of our Redeemer on the cross, we pray that others too may know that forgiveness.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.*

*Refrain:
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

*Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.*

*Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.* Frances J Crosby 1873