



Psalms 125-130

Psalm 125-130
Tape #7211
By Chuck Smith

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to the 125th Psalm. These series of psalms had been called the psalms of degrees or also translated ascents. They are psalms that have to do with the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem to worship the Lord on the feast days. And it is thought that as the pilgrims were on the path coming to Jerusalem that they would break forth in these psalms, in the singing of these psalms of ascent. They are psalms that are in anticipation of being in Jerusalem, the surroundings of Jerusalem, worshipping God there in Jerusalem. They have a lot to do with the locale surrounding Jerusalem and this, of course, in Psalm 125 is one of those that speaks of the surroundings of the city.

They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever (125:1).

Mount Zion, the mount upon which the city of David was built. A tremendous place of defense. It was almost God designed it to be easily defended. The mount Zion standing there. A reminder to the people. If they will put their trust in the Lord, they will be as mount Zion. They won't be removed but will stand steadfast. And how important it is to put our trust in the Lord. The strength that comes, stability that comes.

You wonder why it is that we have such a difficult time trusting in the Lord. There are people who are con artists who go around all the time saying, Trust me, man, trust me. I can double your money in six months. Just give me your money and in six months, I'll double it for you. Trust me, I've got this deal, man. And it's amazing how many people place their life savings in the hands of these guys that are con artists. When the police come and say, Did you invest with this guy? Yeah, yeah, oh boy, yeah. Well, we're sorry but this guy is a fraud. Oh, can't be. Can't believe that. They put their trust in man. And yet, they profess a difficulty of putting their trust in God. You put your trust in man and you're apt to be as one who is on a landslide. I mean, the mountain is moved. But putting your trust in the Lord. The strength, the stability, as mount Zion.

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem (125:2),

On the east side of Jerusalem, mount of Olives. On the south side of Jerusalem, above it and looking out, you see what is called traditionally through the years the mount of evil counsel. It is thought that that is the mountain in which Ahithophel gave his counsel to Absalom when he was coming to Jerusalem to overtake his father. Interestingly enough, and I'm sure it's just by coincidence, the mount of evil counsel is now occupied by the U.N. The Jews get a big kick out of that. They're happy to point out that the U.N. headquarters for the Middle East are on the mount of evil counsel.

To the north side of Jerusalem, Mount Scopus. And so Jerusalem surrounded by the mountains and thus here, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem." The pilgrims standing there in Jerusalem seeing mount Scopus, the mount of Olives, the mount of evil counsel, and as these mountains surround Jerusalem,

so the LORD is all around his people from henceforth and even for ever (125:2). How our lives are so encompassed by God. In Psalm 139 we find David saying, "You are before me, You are behind me and Your hand is upon me" (Psalm 139:5). I'm surrounded by God. I never arrive at any place but what God has not preceded me there and prepared me for that place and prepared that place for me. God goes before me. He surrounds me.

As I look back, I can see the hand of God upon my life. Even in those hard times, in those difficult circumstances, in those heavy trials. As I look back, I can see God's hand was there to guide, to sustain and to teach and instruct me. Surrounded by God. "Thou hast beset me before and behind, and Thy hand is upon me" (Psalm 139:5).

The Lord said to the children of Israel that through their wandering in the wilderness, through those forty years, He said I went before thee and prepared the place for you to pitch your tents. God always goes

before us. And He prepares the place for us to pitch our tents. And so I do not arrive at any point or any situation in life but what God has not preceded me there. Prepared the place for me to pitch my tent and in turn, prepared me for that place. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so God surrounds His people."

For the rod of the wicked shall not rest (125:3)

And the rod there is the rod or the scepter of the wicked. "Shall not rest,"

upon the lot of the righteous (125:3);

They shall not be ruled over by the wicked.

lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity (125:3).

So the prayer,

Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel (125:4,5).

That is actually sort of a prayer, Peace be upon Israel. The prayer, "Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good, to those that are upright in their hearts." Lord, just be good to them. "But for those that turn aside to crooked ways, the LORD will take care of them, lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace upon Israel."

Now the 126th psalm has to do with the return from the exile from Babylon, the captivity. The nation of Israel, the nation of Judah had forsaken the Lord. Their history is a tragic history. They were a nation that were created by God. By their trust in the Lord. They were a nation that God had chosen that through this nation, He might accomplish His purposes of bringing the Messiah into the world. And thus they were a chosen people, a special people in that they were to be governed and ruled by God.

They weren't to be as the heathen nations around them that worshipped false gods, idolatry. You see, the pagans had deified many of the fleshly desires or pursuits of man. There was a lot of superstition about life. There was a lot of awe and wonder concerning life. They lived closer to reality than we live today. We live in a plastic world.

They didn't have hospitals with sanitary white sheets and nurses. When they had to have a baby, they just had a baby. The husband was there to help the delivery of the child and it was a family kind of an affair when the child was born. And thus, they were close to life and birth, and planting and sowing, and things of this nature. They were just close to life and they stood in awe of the mystery of life. Much more than we do.

I think that one of the most exciting and awesome experiences of my life was when I had to deliver a baby. It wasn't my own but it was just a fantastic experience of seeing that new life. To cut the cord and to hold in your hands that new life. To see it take its first breath. To hear it utter its first cry. You just stand there in awe of the mystery of life. And you think of the processes by which life came into existence.

This marvelous design of God where there is that combination of the cells; taking of the twenty-six chromosomes from the father and the twenty-six from the mother and combining them together in a new life. And you hold that and you realize the potential. You see those little hands. You see those little feet. You see it breathing. You see how already the processes are there and formed and it's just an awesome thing. And these people lived close to life.

Not understanding the true and the living God and seeing the creation of life, many of the heathens began to worship the creative acts that bring forth new life. And thus there was the worship of the sex gods, the sexual symbols because they associated that with the creation of life. They began to worship the female goddess Ashtoreth. She was the goddess of fertility. Then they began to make these things idols and make idols of them and worshipped them because they could see in these things the life.

And trees, the seeds and the fact that the seed has the potential, the genetic code in it to create a new tree after itself. And that was a miracle, a marvel to them. They began to worship these processes of life. Sort of a pantheism. Everything became as a god to them. They had all of these various gods that they had worshipped and the various emotions that they had deified.

And so the children of Israel who knew the true and the living God for He revealed Himself to them. He's not a god that is made with hands. He's not a god that is made by man but He is the God who has made

man. What a vast difference. They had forsaken Him and they have taken up and began to worship the gods of the heathens, the pagans around them. The forces of nature as they could observe them. And God said, If you don't turn away from these false gods and serve and worship Me, then I will forsake you and you will go into captivity. And your enemies will come and they will destroy your cities and they will carry you away captive. But they did not listen to the warnings of God. They continued in their idolatrous ways until God allowed their enemies to come and to defeat them and they were carried away captive.

Jeremiah said the period of captivity for Judah would be seventy years. Seventy years would they be in Babylon. Isaiah said that God would turn them again from their captivity. He would raise up a king. He called the king by name, Cyrus, and he will give the decree that will allow my people to return from their captivity.

So after seventy years of Babylonian captivity when the Babylonian empire had fallen to the Medo-Persian empire and Cyrus, one of the generals, became king, Daniel no doubt took him the prophecies of Isaiah and said, Look, man, our prophets talked about you 150 years ago. Long before you were born. Look what the prophet said about you. Called you by your name. And Cyrus was so amazed that his name was in their prophetic records. He was convinced that theirs was the true God and he signed the decree that allowed the children of Israel to return to their land.

And thus, led by Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Joshua, they came back to Israel, to Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding the temple and re-establishing the nation. And so when this first contingency, several thousand of them, made this long journey several weeks from Babylon in anticipation of coming back to the land, the land of their fathers, when they finally came again to Jerusalem; though it was now a rubble, overgrown, for the Babylonians had thoroughly destroyed it, broken down the houses, made a rubble of the temple, the glorious temple of Solomon, and left just the rubble and now through the seventy years the weeds overgrown. It was just a rubble and yet, it was Jerusalem and to them it was home. And they stood there and they were like people who were in a dream. It was too good to be true. I can't believe this is really happening. The excitement, the glory, the thrill of standing again in Jerusalem.

When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter (126:1,2),

Just the glorious rejoicing.

and our tongue with singing: and then among the heathen the word was going around, The LORD has done great things for them (126:2).

The psalmist affirms it.

The LORD or Jehovah hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad (126:3).

The young ones, when they laid the foundation of the new temple. There was a great celebration. They were just shouting and rejoicing. All the neighbors round about could hear the shouts of joy and excitement that went up as they laid the foundations for the new temple, rebuilding again the temple. But the old ones, they were a few really old fellows who could remember the temple of Solomon and all of its glory. And though these young ones were just singing and shouting and making a loud a-hoopla, the older ones were weeping. It was so pitiful in comparison to the glorious Solomon's Temple. It was just a pittance. And so the older ones were weeping for the lost glory though the new ones were rejoicing in anticipation. We're going to have our own temple again, our own place to meet and worship God. So, "The Lord hath done great things for us; for which we are glad."

Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south (126:4).

At this time, of course, not all had come back from their captivity. And so they're praying for the remnant that they also might return. "Even as the streams in the south." Down in the south, the Negev, very dry and arid area. But during the rains they have these flash floods and the gullies and the washes are just filled with water. But it's a seasonal thing, it's sort of like Tucson. It's a dry, arid place but boy, you get some of those summer thunderheads and showers. You can get some flash floods. We've seen these gullies just filled with water and overflow. Lord, let it be like those streams, the flood coming, of the return of Your people.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy (126:5).

They can remember the weeping, the tears as they were carried away captive. The prayers, the tears as they cried unto the Lord. Some forty-seven times the Bible speaks about crying to the Lord. Twenty-one times it commands you to cry unto the Lord. But “they cried unto the Lord” is mentioned about forty-seven times in the Bible. Thus the tears when prayers are offered.

Your heart is so burdened over the needs as you think of the conditions and as you bring these petitions to God, you’re just overwhelmed with the emotions of sorrow for what’s happening, what’s going on. And so as they were in captivity, the tears, sowing in tears but now, the time of harvest. The reaping in joy.

He that goeth forth weeping, as he bears the precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves or the fruit with him (126:6).

And thus the sowing and reaping, the precious seed, bringing forth the harvest. The sowing in tears. And of course, this morning we talked about this. The seed is the Word of God and the planting of the Word of God in the hearts of others. It’s something that should never be done from a pompous, holier than thou attitude. You shouldn’t cram the Word of God down people’s throats nor should you use the Bible as a club to beat people with it. Use it as a scalpel, a sharp two-edged sword. Let it cut the heart. But the cutting with the scalpel is always for the purpose of healing. It’s never for the purpose of destroying.

Don’t use the Bible as an instrument to try and destroy someone. Use it in love to bring healing. Sow in tears. Jesus, as He saw Jerusalem and its rejection, realizing what it would cost them, wept over Jerusalem. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”

Psalms 127 is a song of ascents for Solomon. Thus we would think of it relating to the building of the temple and thus it reads,

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it (127:1):

I think that this is one of the major lessons that we need to learn as Christians: the futility of our efforts. The importance of God’s work and trusting in the Lord for His work, rather than in our own efforts or in our own abilities. For “unless the Lord build the house, unless the Lord does the work, all of our efforts are in vain.”

I think that this is an important scripture for every pastor as he thinks about his church and the building of the church. Not the physical building but the building of the congregation, the people. Because it seems to be the ambition and desire of every pastor to have a larger church, to have more people. And it’s amazing the things that they do in order to draw a crowd, to increase their attendance. I read of pastors that climb on the roof of their church to eat lunch in fulfillment of a vow that they made to the people, If you’ll have 250 in Sunday School next Sunday, I’ll eat my lunch on the top of the church. So everyone wants to see the pastor up on top of the church looking foolish and so they bring their friends and up he goes.

But they look to gimmicks, promotional gimmicks to add to the church, to increase the attendance. But it’s important to remember, “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.” All of that stuff is just a lot of wasted effort and time. I know by experience. I am ashamed of what I have done in the past to try to build the church as I was following the design programs of the denomination and doing my best through all kinds of gimmicks to build the church. And it was vain.

Man is filled with ideas. I remember one of the last programs when I was still in a denomination that was foisted upon us. We didn’t follow it. I was too tired. I was worn out by then. But some friends of ours who pastored a church in Phoenix, they went gung-ho. They had all kinds of ideas this year for the building of attendance. The forming of the committees. Transportation committee to transport anybody to church who doesn’t have means of transportation. The telephone committee. And so what they did is they took the Phoenix phone book and cut the thing apart, every page and then they had people pledge to call all of the names on the page and invite them to church and let them know that if they needed transportation that someone would pick them up. And so they would turn those names over to the transportation committee.

They had balloons that they filled with gas and checked with the weatherman and went outside of Phoenix and released these balloons and had sufficient gas and all designed to fall down on the city of Phoenix. Inside of these balloons was a little card and the card was an invitation to come to Sunday School. They were all numbered and it said, There will be a numbered draw and the one who has the lucky number will get a special prize. It was well designed. It was a classic program. And they went the whole ten yards.

They did the whole thing. And some three months after the whole promotional thing was over, because you always worked towards one grand Sunday, get them all there. But that's never the thermometer of the success of a program. It isn't the last day of the program, the great final giving away prizes. That's not the true test. The true test is a few months later, how many have you really gained?

Jesus said, I've chosen you that you should bring forth fruit, that your fruit should remain. It's the abiding fruit that really counts, not just how many you can get into a building on a certain day. But how many are lasting, how many are there, what has been the real true fruit, the permanent type of growth.

And so I asked the pastor about three months later. I said, You went through this whole thing, what did your church really gain from this whole program that you were in? And they said, There's one old man in his eighties that lives twenty-five miles out of Phoenix that these people have to go out and pick up every Sunday and bring him to church. However, he's deaf and can't hear the message and he falls asleep during the sermon. Snore so loud, it disturbs others. But he's lonely and so he always calls for a ride. All of that effort, all of the money that was spent and the effort that went for it.

But "except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it." Oh, that we would learn that.

except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain (127:1).

Unless the Lord keeps your house, all the burglar alarms and everything else aren't going to work. You better not trust in [them], trust in the Lord to keep the house. To keep the city. Now the watchman going on the walls, watching for the enemy. It was a duty that they had. Men who all night long would walk on the walls of Jerusalem to watch out for enemies. But he's saying, "If the Lord doesn't watch us, the watchmen waketh but in vain." He's not going to protect the city, the Lord is the One. And to recognize the Lord is the One. It isn't saying don't take precautions but it's just saying, Don't trust in the precautions that you've taken. Trust in the Lord to take care of you.

It is vain for you to rise up early, and to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows (127:2):

That is, it's vain for you to wake up and just worry about things. How many people spend restless nights as they're worried about pressures of life, the bills, the things that are happening. Maybe a suit against you and you wake up and your mind starts going over things. You just sit there, lie there and your mind just going over all these things and you can't go back to sleep and you just think, Woe is me, woe is me, "eating the bread of sorrows." That's vain, the Scripture says.

for he gives his beloved sleep (127:2).

If you're trusting in the Lord to keep you, and when those nagging thoughts come to you in the middle of the night and you're awakened and your mind begins to turn to these problems and to these difficulties and all, it's good to just say, Lord, You take care of it. You take care of it. Because it's vain for you to worry about it. It's not going to do any good. All of that pillow planning is worthless. If the Lord doesn't take care of it, man, you're in big trouble. It's vain to sit up late, to get up early, to eat the bread of sorrows because He gives His beloved sleep.

The Scripture does emphasize that the strength of a nation is in the family. The family unit that God created. Families are of God. God created the family and that family unit. And so here we read,

Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward (127:3).

In that culture it was considered absolute blessing to have a child, especially if it was a boy. Girls, I'm sorry about this, but that's just the way it was culturally. When a girl was pregnant and when she would go into labor, they would all come to the house and they would bring all of the refreshments and the band and everything else. Going to have a baby and they're going to have a big celebration, party, because she's going to have a baby. And if it was a boy, the party was on. The band was playing. They were dancing and taking the refreshments. If it was a girl, they just go home. Foolish culture. "Children are a heritage of the Lord: the fruit of the womb." The children are God's reward.

As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth (127:4).

That is, in your old age, have a bunch of sons, they'll protect you. They're a better protection than a bunch of arrows.

And blessed or happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: for they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (127:5).

The gate of the city was a place where disputes were settled. Judgment went forth at the gates of the city. It was the city court kind of a thing and disputes were settled. Here's a guy that has twelve big, strapping sons. And you brought in judgment and there's a dispute at the gate. You stand there and here are these big bruisers standing next to you. You're getting old and feeble but you got these big bruisers standing with you, your sons, there is much protection as a quiver full of arrows. "As arrows in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of your youth. For happy is the man who has his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed when you stand in the gate and have the dispute with your enemy. My sons will take care of you, man, if you don't behave yourself.

The next psalm goes on and it extols further the family life and the blessings of the family life. But it begins with,

Blessed is every one that fears the LORD (128:1);

This is a beatitude of blessedness to those who really reverence God, those who really serve the Lord, fear the Lord. Have a reverence for God. Who have the place for God in their lives. Who have placed God in that priority spot of their lives. Oh, how blessed is the man that has put God first. "The fear of the Lord,"

who walks in his ways (128:1).

Now these are the blessings.

He will eat the labour of his hands (128:2):

One of the sad tragedies in those days was the fact that the battles were often fought right after the harvest. In fact, right after the harvest was called traditionally "the time of going to war." And the idea was to go and rip off from your neighboring nation the harvest that they had just brought in. They just harvested their crops for their winter store and so you go in and rip off their harvest. And thus, many times you labor all year to bring in the harvest only to have it plundered by the enemy. But those who reverence God, those who have put Him at the forefront of their lives will eat the labor of their own hands. You've labored and now you have the privilege of eating.

In the prophecy of the future Kingdom age, the age of peace upon the earth, remember the prophet said, "And every man sits under his own vine and fig tree shall eat and be unafraid" (Micah 4:4). That is, you will enjoy the fruit of your own hands. It wasn't always that way especially in those days.

happy you will be, and it will be well with you (128:2).

You will be a happy man, the man that fears the Lord. He's blessed.

Your wife will be as a fruitful vine by the side of your house (128:3):

Like a neat grapevine beside the house, it's just filled with fruit. Your wife will have lots of children.

and your children will be like olive plants around your table (128:3).

I love that. I can see that. Here's the dad and the table and all these little kids around the table, the olive plants around the table. When an olive tree gets old, all of these little shoots come up from its roots. And so from the roots of the old olive tree come all these new little plants, these new little olive trees. They come about at the roots. And the old tree ultimately withers but these new little shoots, they become the tree. And thus here is the picture of the olive tree with all of these little shoots coming up around it and thus your children like little olive plants around the table.

Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD (128:4).

The blessing is a large family. The blessing is a lot of children. The blessing is eating of your own labor.

The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: you will see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life (128:5).

And then finally, the ultimate, supreme blessing.

You will see your grandchildren (128:6),

I tell you, it's true. It's the ultimate blessing, your grandchildren.

and peace upon Israel (128:6).

So the promise of God's blessing upon those that fear the Lord. The blessing of the grandchildren. Oh man, I better not get started on that. It's glorious. I can't describe it.

Many a time (129:1)

This one deals now with the afflictions that they have gone through. “Many a time,”
have they afflicted me from my youth (129:1),
I’ve gone through. I’ve experienced affliction.
then let Israel say: Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed
against me (129:1,2).

Paul said I am cast down but I’m not destroyed. They haven’t prevailed against me. Yes, they have set their snares and I’ve been afflicted but they haven’t prevailed.

The plowers have plowed upon my back: and made long their furrows (129:3).

This could be a reference to the slavery especially in Egypt. When their taskmasters would lay across their back the whip and it would leave these long welts like a furrow that has been plowed across the back. The long welt as the result of the whip laid on the back. “Many a time the plowers have plowed on my back. They’ve left the furrows, long furrows on my back.”

But the LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked (129:4). Those cords of the wicked wherein they held me, wherein I was bound. The Lord has cut them. He has set me free.

Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth before it grows up (129:5,6):

Over there they have flat roofs and many times they cover the roofs with dirt as waterproofing. So with the dirt on the roofs seeds get blown in the wind and so you have weeds growing on the roof of your house. The weeds though that grow on the roof of the house, the grass that grows there burns up quickly in the late spring, early summer when it starts getting hot. It just withers and dies quickly. It never gets high enough to mow. But that would be a sight to see a guy mowing his grass on his roof. Nor does it ever get high enough that you could bind it in a sheave for storage.

In those days, they would bind the wheat, the hay and all in sheaves and they would store them in sheaves. We do it in bales today. Bales of hay. They would bind it up into a sheave and they would store these sheaves as the fodder for the cattle during the winter months. “Those that hate Zion, the wicked, let them be as grass upon the housetop which withers before it really grows up, withers quickly and dies.”

Wherewith the mower cannot fill his hand (129:7);

In other words, it never gets big enough to mow.

nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom (129:7).

It never is able to be harvested.

Neither do those that go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD (129:8).

This was a very familiar phrase during harvest time. When you had passed by a field and the people would be out there harvesting the field, the familiar phrase as you see them harvesting you say, The blessing of the Lord upon you. The Lord be with you. And it was just a typical. Even to the present day, typical, as you see the man harvesting his field, you’ll see his friends walking by and he’s out there harvesting they’ll say, The blessing of the Lord upon you. And he’ll say, I bless you in the name of the Lord.

You remember in the story of Ruth, chapter two, verse six, when Boaz came out to the field and his harvesters were there. He said, I bless you in the name of the Lord. And they said, The Lord bless thee. They would usually say, The Lord bless thee and thy seed, but he didn’t have any children. So it’s just typical as you are enjoying the fruit of harvest to recognize that God has blessed and to just pronounce the blessing of God upon the man as he harvests the fields.

Psalm 130 is a cry of the psalmist who was going through some heavy, heavy trials.

Out of the depths (130:1)

That is, out of the depths of my being, out of the depths of my soul.

I cried unto thee, O LORD (130:1).

And I’m sure that all of us can relate to this for there have been those times when we’ve been overwhelmed by the circumstances of our lives. And out of the depths of our being, out of the depths of our soul, our prayers have come. It’s just we’re so overwhelmed by the circumstances. We cry unto God. And so, “Out of the depths of my being have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.”

Lord, hear my voice: let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications (130:2).

O God, hear me, I'm desperate.

If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand (130:3)?

Usually when we are going through these heavy, heavy things in life, those really deep waters, somehow we always seem to feel that this is God's judgment on me because. All of us have failed, all of us have come short of what God would have us to be. The Bible tells us that. None of us have attained or achieved all that God would have us to be or do. And we're aware of our shortcomings. We're aware of our failures. And whenever these heavy, heavy trials come and our soul is just weighted down, the enemy takes advantage. Yes, you see, because you did this, God's getting even with you.

And thus the psalmist says, "Lord, if You would mark iniquities, no one would stand." In other words, he recognized that it isn't because of my iniquity. He recognized if God would lay it on us because we had failed, no one would come out. We'd all be wiped out. And thus recognizing in this situation that it isn't really a punishment. And I think that that's so important that we not blame God or think that God is some way punishing us. It's so sad.

This week we were with a family as they were going through the deepest water. The Lord took their little girl, the joy of their life, home. That's never easy. The dad was sort of blaming himself and that's always tragic because it's not true. But the enemy would say, You see, if you had only done this, if you had done that, if you, if you, if you, and he torments a person with that If I had only. And it can be a hell.

Now the psalmist was wise enough to recognize that these deep, heavy experiences are not because of my failure and my iniquity because Lord, if You should mark iniquities, who would stand? None of us have a chance.

For there is forgiveness with thee, that You might be revered (130:4),

That we might stand in awe and wonder of You.

And so I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word I hope (130:5).

Lord, I'm waiting upon you and I'm just hoping in Your word. The promises of the word. I'm hanging on to that. Have you ever been at that place where you just hang on to the word of God? Lord, You said.

Jacob, he was really facing. He had deceived his father and received the birthright that the father was wanting to give to his older brother Isaac. Earlier he had conned his brother out of the birthright, now he conned his father out of the blessing. His older brother was so mad he says, Soon as my dad dies I'm going to kill that rat. He made a vow, I'm going to kill him. I hate him, I'm going to kill him. I swear, I'm going to kill him. So Jacob, knowing that his brother had evil intentions, soon as his dad died, he'd kill him. Dad got real sick, thought he's going to die, Jacob took off running. He didn't stop till he got to Babylon 220 miles away. And there he settled down in Babylon for seventeen years. Got married.

And of course, even as he had deceived his father, his father-in-law deceived him and passed off the ugly duckling sister on him for the first bride and when the veil was lifted in the morning light, he saw that he had the wrong sister. Went complaining to the father-in-law, he says, Sorry, son, custom, custom. The younger sister can't get married till her older sister has been married. Tell you what though, serve me for another seven years you can have the younger one, too. So he served another seven years and then he served three extra years in which they made agreements that were constantly being changed as to his wages. Finally, he was getting richer than his father-in-law, his brothers-in-law were getting jealous and he could see that they weren't happy and they were ready to do something. So now it's time to leave them. It's on a lamb once more.

And so he gathers up his wife, his children, and he decides to head back towards home, towards his brother. As he's on his way back, he takes off when his father-in-law and his brothers-in-law are away shearing their sheep. And word comes to them, Jacob's left. He's taken all the cattle and everything that belonged to him with him. His daughters and your grandkids. And so Laban, armed his men, they came chasing after Jacob and the night before they caught up with Jacob the Lord said to Laban, his father-in-law, Don't you lay a hand on him or you're going to answer to me. So Laban felt frustrated.

The next day when he came to Jacob, he says, What's the big idea going off taking my grandkids, not even letting me say goodbye and kiss the grandkids. That's not what he really had in mind. He was going to

really do Jacob in. But the Lord had warned him not to. Don't you know that I have the power to do you hurt and so forth? And this big, big conflagration. It was a big rhubarb really, yelling at each other and all and Jacob says, You changed my wages ten times and all of these accusations. Yelling at him. It was really fierce and tense. So they drew a line and he said, If you come back over this line, you're going to be in big trouble and if God hadn't warned me, you'd be in trouble right now. But don't you cross over this line coming back towards us. And the Lord watch over you. I can't watch you anymore. You snake in the grass. But may the Lord watch you while we're absent one from another. You better take care of my girls and not mistreat them.

So Jacob has this heavy, heavy duty experience. A big fight, and it's always discomfiting. Fights with relatives. So that night in the evening, his servants come back who had gone out to scout in front of them and they said, Your brother Esau is coming to meet you. He has two hundred armed men with him. Well now, that's not the way you go out to greet your brother in peace. And Jacob's in a quandary. The angry father-in-law behind him in a line he can't go over, and the angry twin brother Esau coming to meet him. Jacob's in this quandary of what to do.

Oftentimes we find ourselves in the middle of a pressured situation. We don't know which way to turn. Jacob waited on the Lord. In fact, he wrestled with the Lord all night. And so the psalmist speaks about the depths, crying to the Lord, waiting on the Lord. "My soul waits and in His word do I hope."

Now Jacob prayed and he said, Lord, you remember when I left here seventeen years ago? I made a deal with you. He was really overwhelmed with what God had done. He said, When I left here, when I crossed this little stream--he had come to the stream Jabbok, he was back almost to the borders of the land--he said, When I crossed this little stream, all I had was a walking stick. That's all I had. But You've been so faithful to me. Great is Thy faithfulness. Each morning You've shown me new mercies. When I crossed here seventeen years ago, I only had a stick. Now I'm going to cross this stream again and look, I've got two wives, I've got this beautiful children, I've got these hundreds of sheep and cattle, You've blessed me so much. Great has been Your faithfulness, Lord, unto me. And he was recounting what God had done.

But Lord, You said, You said, Return unto your home and I will deal well with you. I'm coming home but Lord, Esau is on his way with two hundred men. But You told me, You said, and he's reminding the Lord of what He said.

A lot of times when I pray I do that, too. I remind the Lord of His promises. Not that He needs it but it helps me to remind the Lord that You said, Lord. "I will supply all of your needs according to My riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). You said that, Lord. And it helps me to remind the Lord of what He said. So I wait for the Lord. "My soul waits and in His word, in the promises do I hope."

My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning (130:6).

A night watchman's job was a lonely kind of a vigil. Can you think of just all night long walking on a wall looking out into the darkness? I imagine that the hours just probably drag and you can't wait for the light of the morning, the dawn. And so all night long as you're walking that wall looking out in the darkness, you keep looking over towards the east to see if there's any dawn, any sign of the morning. And so, "My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: yes, I say, more than they that watch for the morning." That waiting upon God. And sometimes it seems so long. It seems like God is not hearing me and it seems like I've been waiting so long for God to work.

But let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption (130:7).

Therefore put your hope in the LORD.

And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities (130:8).

Lord, if you would mark iniquities, none of us would stand. But you will redeem Israel from all their iniquities. The word Israel is a man of God or governed by God. And the Lord redeems those who are governed by Him from all their iniquities.

Isn't that glorious? If God would mark iniquities, none of us would stand. But He's redeemed us from all our iniquities.

We'll pick up on Psalm 131 next week and continue on through the Psalms 131 through 135 next week.

In these psalms there's something for everybody because they come out of life and life situations. They're practical. They're not some kind of idealistic philosophy or they don't deal with that unreal kind of a serial everything-is-beautiful, wonderful, never-is-anything-wrong kind of a, but it deals with the real issues of life and thus it can speak to us. We can identify with the psalmist, with the situations that he was facing. With the disappointments. With the hurts. With the pressures. With the excitement and the glory of seeing God work. With that difficult time of waiting for God sometimes to accomplish His purposes in our lives. But there's always something for each of us. And it's good to let the word of God minister to our hearts.

Tonight if you need special ministry, if you need for the elders to pray for you, for physical healing, for financial problems, marital problems, whatever; we encourage you to go back to the Prayer Room, the elders will be back there at the close of the service to pray for you and to minister to you no matter what your need might be. And so feel free to go back and spend some time in prayer and let the elders, if you need to or desire to, minister to you and pray for you. "For the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." God be with you, bless and keep you in His love, strengthen you in your walk with Jesus Christ. May it be a beautiful week spent with Him.