

# Dealing With Sorrow

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We're going to Psalm 137 tonight. The children of Israel are actually, this Psalm was actually written by one of the children of Israel as he reflected back on the deep sorrow and the misery that they had experienced when they were in Babylonian captivity. This Psalm is just pregnant with sorrow. The mourning kind of just jumps off the pages. It's beyond the wording. Hebrew scholars tell us that the actual Hebrew terms used by the psalmist, you know, the Hebrew language is a guttural language. It has a lot of groaning, growling sounds in the pronunciation of the words and the scholars say that it is even written so that you feel the moaning and the groaning and the sorrow in the actual words.

It's an imprecatory Psalm in that it calls for wrath to come down on Israel's enemies and, I guess, it's noted as one of the most difficult passages to wrestle with and that is at the very end when the psalmist cries out for the most violent judgment and wrath to come against Edom and Babylon. However, at risk of sounding like I know it all and I don't know anything. One thing you learn when you preach and study this long is what you don't know but I believe with the balance of the biblical text the ending is quite easy to understand. But it's a real challenge maybe if you do just a casual reading of it. Who have you known lately who has cried out to God and said, "How blessed will be the ones," he's talking about Babylon, "who repays you With the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones Against the rock." It's a powerful statement and troubling in some ways, I think, unless you understand all that's going on here.

Let's read it together as these Jews are in Babylon with deep sorrow and have lost their song.

1 By the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat down and wept,  
When we remembered Zion.  
2 Upon the willows in the midst of it  
We hung our harps.  
3 For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
And our tormentors mirth, saying,  
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."  
4 How can we sing the LORD'S song

In a foreign land?  
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
May my right hand forget her skill.  
6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you,  
If I do not exalt Jerusalem  
Above my chief joy.  
7 Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom  
The day of Jerusalem,  
Who said, "Raze it, raze it  
To its very foundation."  
8 O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one,  
How blessed will be the one who repays you  
With the recompense with which you have repaid us.  
9 How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones  
Against the rock.

So as this Jewish writer reflects back on the experience of Babylonian captivity, his heart is overflowing. That's kind of a paradox, I guess, way of saying it but it's full of sorrow and full of grief.

Now, a lot of folks are sorrowful today. A lot of people are sorrowful because, at least in part, that's just their makeup. I do believe people come forth from the womb with a disposition to melancholy if not depression. It's just tough for them. As a matter of fact, some of the greatest hymn writers and some of the greatest pastors I have ever studied were men who were kind of prone to that and I've often wondered why. As a matter of fact, I do not know a pastor of antiquity that I've respected in reading their biography who didn't wrestle with depression. Some have argued that, "Well, that's because they wrestle with such weighty issues and they take very seriously the souls of men that are put under their shepherding and it's just a weighty thing to deal with." Nevertheless, this psalmist is expressing the great weight he's feeling but we know some people just are predispositioned, if you will, to struggle in that area and we ought to have grace toward them and compassion toward them while we exhort them to fight the good fight in their thinking because that's where the battle of depression is won is in your thinking and learning to talk to yourself and stop listening to yourself. It's a good place to say amen. We all need to learn to more talk to ourselves the truth of God's word instead of listening to our old, depraved, fallen hearts.

Then some people have just experienced maybe a recent season of just discouragement and sorrow and it's just a season you go through and you weep before the Lord and you cry out to the Lord in your sorrow. Sometimes connected with the first 2, but this one is the one that can really put a child of God in deep sorrow: unrepented of sin. These guys said, "Our captors demanded of us songs," because the Jews were known as great musicians and singers. The Babylonians said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." They said, "We hung our harps on the willows. We can't sing God's song in this godless city." You know, Babylon represents the city of man and ungodliness. Jerusalem represents the

city of God and godliness. "We can't sing the praises of God in this wretched, ungodly city."

Some choose to walk in sin and they sing the song of sin, not the songs of Zion. Well, that's what happened to Israel. Israel had sinned. She had fallen into rebellion. Idolatry filled the land and she did what's done in every generation and is so prominent in our generation: they would take false religion and man-centered immoralities and idolatries and plaster Jehovah worship on the outside to make it look and feel okay. A cosmetic veneer of true religion was there but in their heart they were just Baal worshipers and worshipers of other pagan deities and ungodly things; intermarrying with foreign wives and on and on we could go. So because of their sin, God let's Babylon be his rod of chastisement to come against them. So they went off instead of singing the songs of Zion, Israel went off singing the song of sin and the song of sin is like dynamite. There's some sizzle. There's a big pop. But then everything comes down in ruins and that's where they find themselves.

Notice first of all, their rebellion. We see this in verses 1 through 3 and we see, of course, they're there by the rivers of Babylon and there they sat down and they wept. Well, why were they there? It's not spoken directly in the Psalm but the context of the Old Testament makes it very clear: they're in Babylon because they were in sin. Lamentations 1:18 speaks to this very event. It says, "The LORD is righteous; For I have rebelled against His command; Hear now, all peoples, And behold my pain; My virgins and my young men Have gone into captivity." So the writer of Lamentations says, "I have sinned against God and the punishment is I'm taken into Babylonian captivity."

Now, God does not deal with his people today nationally, however, we do know the New Testament tells us very clearly what happened to Israel happened as examples for us. So there are powerful parallels here for us today. So here they are in this rebellion. Because of their rebellion, they're in captivity and the word "captivity" is the idea of bondage and when you sin continually or habitually without repentance, God can allow you and often will allow you to become ensnared in the stronghold of sin in order to chastise you or to discipline you. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul writes about the young man in the church at Corinth who has fallen into grievous sexual immorality and the sexual immorality becomes so prominent and common in the Corinthian culture, the church there was kind of laughing it off and not even concerned about it. But Paul, their functioning pastor, steps in and says, 1 Corinthians 5:5, "I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." A perfect parallel to what God did to Israel. "I decided to deliver Israel over to Babylon for the destruction of her flesh. To humble her, that she might be returned to me and restored." That's what God is doing here. So here they are in this strange land in bondage and we find that Israel there quite often in the Old Testament, do we not, they start out in the brick yards of Egypt and now they find themselves by the canals of Babylon.

Three things about sin when we are living in sin. First of all, we soon find out sin is hard. Everything about this text speaks of the hardness of their chosen life. Again, it sizzled for a while. It was alluring for a season. But then everything came falling down around them.

People say, "Well, it's hard to serve the Lord." Well, you try sin. Sin leads to hard times. Proverbs 13:15 says, "the way of the treacherous is hard." Probably the best translation but you could translate that "the way of the transgressor is hard." It's a hard life to choose.

As a matter of fact, I'll turn there right quick, Matthew 5. Keep your finger in Psalm 137 but Matthew 5. The Lord knows how grievous and hard a life of sin is so in figurative language he gives some very strong exhortations here. Matthew 5:29, "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell." So he talks about the ultimate course of the sinner, obviously one who is not converted, is eternal punishment. The way of sin is hard.

Just thinking about some people from our past history. I thought about Howard Hughes. I just saw that movie years ago about the life of Howard Hughes and the enormous wealth. The wealthiest man in the world and he was absolutely miserable and paranoid beyond belief. You could not have had a more painful, hard life than Howard Hughes, the wealthiest man in the world. Do you know why? Because sin is hard. Sin is hard. Elvis Presley had everything, everything he could ever desire and the testimony is that he was frustrated, depressed, addicted to drugs. He had a hard, hard life. Ask the drunk who lives in the gutter. Ask the drug addict who supports her habit with prostitution.

By the way, none of us could be more grieved and pained by the plague of the abuse of women and children. As a matter of fact, I'm just going to tell you that these folks who traffic in children ought to get the death penalty. I mean, there's nothing worse than that. But listen, friend, when a woman grows up and puts herself in these situations, she's making some choices herself. She's not totally a victim all the time and though there is truth and we abhor that parent or that person who would take a child from their home and use them in such a vile and coarse and wicked way, no punishment would be too great for them. On the other hand, when a person grows up, they can choose not to do those things because many do. Do you know why we often choose wrong and why we often use as a crutch the hardships we've been through? It's because we are sinners at heart. It's we're sinners at heart. Now look, there's room for compassion and understanding and long-suffering but ultimately we're not helping someone if we don't help them face the choices that they make and that there are consequences in those choices. Sin leads to a hard life. Go to the rehab clinic and look at the person suffering from withdrawals and hallucinations and nightmares. Ask the young, handsome boy who got out partying and wrecked his car and now is crippled and a paraplegic and can't walk any longer.

These Jews find a hard, difficult life in Babylon and their hearts are broken. Sin is hard. Secondly, sin hurts. It parallels very closely with being hard but sin hurts. In verse 1 they said, "There we sat down and wept." There we sat down and wept. There was a season of time when the Jews were doing really well. They were conquering their enemies and they got at ease in Zion and they let their guard down and they began to bend the corners on God's law and run amok with their lust and then they tried to paper it over with a few

external religious motions or practices. It's not fun anymore, though. Listen to me: sin always brings sorrow. Sin always brings sadness. It always brings despair. Sin ultimately brings depression.

They wept because of the pain of sin and, by the way, sin doesn't just hurt you, it always hurts others also. You know, when you involve yourself in sin, by the way, if you're a child of God and you're a member of the church, every time you sin you hurt all of us. We are interconnected in a way that God put together. The connection of God's church is so wonderful. It is mysterious. It's spiritual but it's wonderful beyond compare so much so that in heaven you will not know each other as husband and wife but we will know each other as brother and sister in Christ. That bond lasts for all eternity. Every time we willfully sin we hurt others. It's always been that way and it always will be that way. You hurt your family. You hurt friends. You hurt the church of Jesus Christ. I have been there when I've counseled and prayed and wept with a family who lost their child due to a drunk driver. A mom, a wife, left alone to raise her kids because of an unfaithful husband. Sin always hurts and it always hurts others.

In verse 2, the psalmist writes, "Upon the willows in the midst of it We hung our harps." They hung their harps because their song is gone. There is no joy in their hearts. There is only hurt there now. They're in a strange land. You know, sin always robs you of your song. It always takes your joy away. You can't sing the songs of Zion drinking liquor. You can't sing the songs of Zion while you're willfully using your tongue in dirty and hurtful language to others. You can't sing the songs of Zion going to dark and dirty places that exist to dishonor God. "Well, I'm just going there to hang out. I don't drink." You can't sing the songs of Zion in there. You can't sing the songs of Zion 5 minutes after you've been wagging your tongue in gossip destroying somebody else. Sin will take your song. Sin always hurts. Let me ask you tonight: is your song gone? They hung their harps on the willow trees and said, "How can we sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land?" Are you in a foreign land?

Something else that hurts. Look at verse 3, "For there our captors demanded of us songs, And our tormentors mirth, saying, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'" Now, I've heard commentary writers say that there wasn't really any derision in this. The Babylonians really wanted to hear them sing. I don't believe that. I believe they're saying, "Ah-ha, your God couldn't protect you. Your God couldn't defend you. Your God couldn't keep you from us enslaving you. Now, sing to him." They're just rubbing it in. This is painful. This is just running the sword through.

Grace Life church member, have you ever gone out into the community when outwardly things maybe were not so good here and somebody just kind of stuck the knife in and turned it a little bit? "You're all not doing so good, are you? How is everything going up there?" You wouldn't believe how many people I ran into who were Christians who rejoiced when we had people leaving us years ago. They were rejoicing in it and working in it as hard as they could to get others to leave. That's a difficult thing to go through. Well, that's what the psalmist, I believe, is saying they're going through: a hurtful derision. And all that they had gone through, this not to mention that they saw their

temple destroyed and they saw everything that they stood for in ruins and to them, worshipping God had a strong geographical context. Jerusalem was the place. Jerusalem was called the valley of vision. It was called the valley of vision because that's where God gave his revelation to his people and that place has been destroyed and God let it happen. So the Babylonians are coming and insisting on a great concert but they say, "We cannot sing the songs of Zion in this foreign land."

I remember when I was a teenager. I was probably about a year and a half to 2 years before I was converted. You couldn't have been further from God than I was and I know there's no real debate about how far, you're either away from God or you're not but I didn't grow up in church. I was just out there and I was with my buddies in a car. We were probably going to get something to drink and just party for the night. One of them brought up that one of our friends, we weren't real close friends but one of our friends at school had just gotten baptized in a Baptist Church and that person had no longer gotten that sentence out of their mouth that, "Old Bill," that was actually his name, "Bill had gotten baptized," one of my buddies in the car chuckled and said, "It won't last." Do you know why? Everybody we partied with had been baptized. Everybody we ran with had been baptized. It was a mockery. That hurts. When Christians live in sin, it hurts to hear others talk about the hypocrisy and the compromise. So on a human level, there's no doubting why guys like me were just skeptical of everything because everybody I knew had a church membership and a lot of them, as far as living willfully in sin, were as bad or worse than I was.

Sin is hard and sin hurts. But thirdly, sin holds. Don't let it pass your thinking here that they are in captivity. They didn't come here on vacation. They are held by the cords of their sins. It is their sin that brought Babylon upon them as the agent of God's judgment. It is Babylon that holds them. They don't have any freedom to do anything different. Now later, the Medo-Persians will come in and they'll have some sympathy from Cyrus and they'll be allowed to exodus back home, if you will, but right now they're in slavery in Babylon. That's the thing about sin: if you keep on in sin, it has an enslaving stronghold to it. Every single person who gives themselves over to sin is convinced they can control it. You can't.

My friend, why do you think the people in our culture today who are willfully in the grossest immoralities, why don't they stop? Why do they have to parade and march and rail and revolt and mock and sneer and work to get their sin promoted as acceptable? Here's why: they're in bondage. They can't stop. So all they can do is hopefully change the culture to accept their sin and applaud it and support it and endorse it with them. Someone said sin is like a bit and bridle in a horse's cheek. Someone said sin is like handcuffs to the prisoner. Sin is like fly paper that holds a common fly. Sin is like the maximum security cell that holds a death row inmate. Sin is like a tick that latches on and sucks off the vital juices. Sin is like a mighty grizzly bear holding that salmon in its mouth. Sin is a massive anaconda that wraps around and coils tightly and will not let go. Sin is the vicious lion that grabs the back of the neck of the gazelle and brings it to the ground. It's not getting away. They're in Babylonian captivity and, my friend, there are we all except for the grace of God. Except for the grace of God.

I had been converted just a few months and there was a friend of our family's who was a drunk. At that time, he was a businessman in our hometown and did quite well in his business. But he was slowly losing everything and I heard where he was one night and he was actually sleeping in his car in a person's driveway and I found him and went into the car. I was a new believer in Christ. I was trying to do right and I witnessed to him all night long in the car. I just tried to tell him about the things of Christ and he looked me dead in the eyes at the end of all of it and said, "I'm not through raising hell yet." Why wouldn't he listen? He didn't listen because he was in a stronghold of sin that he couldn't get out of. Last I heard he was living over in the government-sponsored housing project. He had lost everything.

The old evangelists used to say that sin will take you further then you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. And sin will cost you more than you want to pay. It is a cliché used for years by evangelists but it's still true. They are in the bondage of Babylon, crushed with sorrow and mourning over sin. Every one of us sitting in this room has a son or a daughter, a spouse, a grandparent, an aunt or an uncle, a friend, somebody we know quite well and right now in your mind's eye you can see them and you know sin has or is destroying them. Sin destroys. There are only 2 kinds of people on the earth: repenters and sinners. Those who are converted keep sinning but they keep repenting and they avoid the strongholds. Sinners run headlong into the strongholds.

Well, thank God we don't have to end there. That's the sorrowful, mournful condition of these rebels, Israel, who dishonored God in every way and God has brought the strong arm of Babylon against them to discipline them. But notice now repentance. The whole Psalm actually, I think, from verse 1 to 9 speaks of their repentance but especially we see it in verse 4 with some remorse when they say in verse 4, "How can we sing the LORD'S song In a foreign land?" There's that deep regret over where they find themselves. Now, listen to me: remorse is not repentance but everyone who repents has remorse. Repentance is more than just feeling sorrowful for where you have gotten yourself but it includes that. And there they are deeply sorrowful, "How can we sing God's praises in this godforsaken land that we find ourselves in? Words would be out of place here and we are beginning to see this isn't our home and we don't belong here. We don't belong in this godless city. We are God's people and we should be in God's city. We should be back in Jerusalem." I think at this point they're much like the prodigal son who kept running and kept rebelling and kept running and kept rebelling and the Bible says he finds himself in the hog pen eating the pods that the hogs were eating and the Bible says he came to himself. Someone said he just kept selling everything he had and giving everything away and finally had nothing and he just came to himself. Well, there was remorse in his heart when he realized, "Look what I've gotten myself into." That's a part of repentance. That's the start of repentance.

John the Baptist preached repentance. The apostles preached repentance. Jesus preached repentance. You know, it's interesting today as we listen to a lot of folks telling us "how to reach our communities," they're telling us we need to bring the songs of Babylon into the church and these Jews were saying, "We're not going to sing the songs of Zion around

the Babylonians." I think those people that want to turn the church into Babylon "in order to be effective to reach people," they are the ones who need to repent. We ought to sing the songs of Zion in here.

Well, there is remorse but secondly, there is a return. Return is always a part of repentance. Now first of all, they return in their hearts and later when they are able and I believe in faith, they know God's covenant is going to be faithful to them, they are going to actually bodily, physically return back home to Jerusalem but their hearts returned first. What do they say there in verse 5? Notice where their heart is, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, May my right hand forget her skill." Verse 6, "May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth If I do not remember you, If I do not exalt Jerusalem Above my chief joy."

So his heart has returned to God. Their hearts had returned to God. Now, he can't return physically, he's in bondage. The Babylonians won't let him go but he's talking about returning to Jerusalem and you might think, "Well, I don't know exactly how that works. Can't he just get right with God even though he's in Babylon?" Well, in a sense but it reminds me of Brother Scott. He's in heaven now but he was here with us for some time. I'm going to share this because he shared it in the newspapers. Scott struggled with alcohol and he fell into a drunken binge and left town and ended up in South Alabama on a drunk and we contacted him several times and he didn't respond. We finally contacted him with a certified letter and said, "We love you. We'll come get you. We'll do anything we can to help you but you've got to tell us you're ready to repent and you want to get help and do better. But if you don't, we're bringing you before the church," and we gave him the date, "and we'll ask the church to vote you out of membership, not for your sin of drunkenness but for your refusal to repent and let us help you." He told me, I'll never forget it, he said, "Pastor, when I received that letter that you were dismissing me from the church if I didn't repent, I knew there was something to return for."

So in his repentance, he came back to his Jerusalem. He came back to the people of God and he stood before our church, publicly repented and was restored to fellowship, became a city councilman in Florence, Alabama. I wish I could say Scott never struggled again but you do understand you have walked with God long enough to know that you never really overcome everything, you just get in the fight and you stay in the fight. But you return back to God's people and that's what they're saying here. "We've got to return back to God's city and back to Jerusalem and our hearts are returned there" and that shows me such a picture, a clear picture of genuine repentance.

Now, let's go to the difficult section. I think this is a part of the overall spirit of repentance and that is: a call for righteous retribution. A call for righteous retribution. It begins in verse 7. We'll just read 7 through 9. He says, "Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, 'Raze it, raze it To its very foundation.'" Now, what's happened is the Babylonians are conquering Israel and Jerusalem specifically and while they are doing that the Edomites kind of stood around on the borders cheering the Babylonians on and even helping capture some of the Jews that would try to run away and delivering them back to the Babylonians. The psalmist as he's



in this imprecatory spirit calling out for wrath to come against these enemies, he begins with Edom. "Remember what they did, Lord. Remember what the Edomites did."

Then he ventures on further, "O daughter of Babylon," this is verse 8, "you devastated one, How blessed will be the one who repays you With the recompense with which you have repaid us. How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones Against the rock." Now, I preached earlier today on forgiveness and how thorough and complete forgiveness, aren't we supposed to love our enemies as Christians? Aren't we supposed to forgive them? I mean, this plea to God is a plea for viciousness and vindication. It seems like it is but we've got to remind ourselves: we haven't walked in the shoes these Jews have walked in. We haven't seen our temple completely destroyed. We haven't seen our city burned to the ground. We haven't stood by and watched them rape our wives and daughters and murder our babies and then take us into slavery in a foreign land. As Spurgeon said, "If you could live in their shoes, you might not be so velvet mouthed about the way you feel about the Babylonians."

But that's not the final thing. Three notes I do want you to think about as you think about this crying of the psalmist that God would bring righteous retribution against these enemies. 1. The psalmist calls for God to bring the retribution. Now, that's different. He didn't take it up in his own hands. The Bible says, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, says the Lord." So he's not saying, "God, we're going to bring the retribution." He's saying, "God, you bring this judgment and retribution against Edom and against Babylon." And by the way, these are judgment decrees the psalmist knew and the Israelites all knew. God has already proclaimed he's bringing that kind of judgment against Babylon. Isaiah 13:15 and 16, "Anyone who is found will be thrust through, And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword. Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces Before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished."

God had already declared this violent retribution of judgment against Babylon so the psalmist is just calling on God to do what God said he's going to do anyway. You do understand, friend, that when Jesus returns in the final judgment, great death is coming over the earth including lots of little ones. Now, I've always held in my theology that children who perish before the age of having a responsible will before God, that they are God's elect and taken to heaven. Now, can I give you chapter and verse and stand on that dogmatically? No, but I believe there's biblical truth that implies that and that's my position. Nevertheless, when God's wrath comes on the earth, very, very many will die of all ages and God here particularly and specifically says, "My wrath is coming against Babylon for what they did to Israel." That's one of the great mysteries of the Old Testament that you see God taking an evil like the Assyrians or the Egyptians or the Babylonians and bringing them against his people, Israel, as a rod of correction and judgment for his people, then saying, "Now because of what you've done to my people, I'm going to judge you." You say, "How is that fair?" I don't know how fair it is, I just know God is just and he can use a crooked stick to correct his children if he wants to, if he desires to.

So first of all, the psalmist is not saying, "I'm taking vengeance in my hand," he's saying, "God, you have declared your wrath against Babylon for their wickedness and their evil. Bring to pass what you have declared." Secondly, the same call for righteous judgment is noted by Christians in the New Testament. You see, friend, there is a difference in the church age when we are living our lives walking in that "loving our enemies" and walking in that "forgiveness for all" and understanding that they are equal sinners with us. While that never ends, there is an age coming when the day of grace will be closed and the day of wrath will have begun. Just as we desire all men to repent and come to Christ in the day of grace, that's God's will, so we will agree with God in the day of wrath. We are with God in his day of grace, amen? We agree with God in the day of wrath.

Thank God we're not in that day yet, amen? But when that day comes, the church will agree with God. Revelation 6:9 through 11, "When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained." These are those saints of God who had not succumbed to the seductions of the antichrist. They would not give up their faith in Jesus Christ. They would not join the false, harlot church. They would not go along with the atrocities and the wickedness of that false church and that false leader named the antichrist. "And because of their testimony," because they stood on Christ, they were martyred by the tens of thousands if not the hundred thousands and maybe the millions. And they are slain and their souls are there underneath the altar.

Verse 10, "And they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'" These souls in heaven already perfected and glorified are saying, they're not saying, "Lord, forgive them," they're saying, "Lord, we know the day of grace has ended. The day of wrath has come. Bring judgment on them." Who are these people persecuting? They are persecuting God's children. The Babylonians came against and persecuted God's children, Israel. In the final days, the antichrist and the false religion of the world and the Babylonish government of the world will come against God's children, the true church, and those who are martyred will cry out, "O God, how long is it going to be before you bring the judgment on those avenging our blood?"

Verse 11, "And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also." So we know that when the day of grace has come to its conclusion and the final judgment of God comes against the earth, those who are God's righteous ones will then agree with God and cry for righteous judgment on the enemies of God.

3. We've got to remind ourselves that cruelties against God's people are cruelties against God himself. In Acts 9:4, Saul is persecuting Christians and God knocks him to the ground and God says, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Saul said, "I'm not persecuting You, I'm persecuting these people." "No, no, no. You don't understand, Saul, when you're attacking Christians, you're attacking Me." Listen my friend, you've got to

think like God thinks. If you offend God, you deserve wrath and judgment. If you attack God, you deserve wrath and judgment and that's what this text is pointing out. The Babylonians had no regard for the God of Israel, Jehovah, the true God as revealed in Scripture and in attacking him, they deserve the wrath that God would bring back upon them. In the New Testament as the book of Revelation unfolds and God's final judgment comes on the earth and Christians are being martyred just for loving and knowing Jesus Christ, those who would come against them have come against God himself and they deserve the wrath and judgment that will come upon them.

Revelation 16:4-7, "Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, 'Righteous are You.'" Note that statement. God's been bringing this judgment against the earth and he's destroying people by the untold numbers and the angel says, "Righteous are You for doing it." Powerful.

"'Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they,'" that's the ones God is now judging, "'they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.' And I heard the altar saying, 'Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.'"

Now, listen to me church, if God in his magnanimous, incomparable being has grace so wonderful and love so infinite that he would cast his favor toward us wretches, keep us out of judgment and give us the righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ, then we accept that, amen? We also accept that he is infinite in holiness and it is a treason and a traitor and a rebellion beyond comprehension for men to dishonor God and sin against him, much less to rage against his children and they deserve the righteous judgment of God.

So as we see the psalmist come down to the end of this Psalm and he cries out to God, "Blessed will be those who even dash their little ones against the rock," God already prophesied it's going to happen. The psalmist was just understanding something of the holy justice of God. Friend, God is not just the big guy up there, he's a holy God we have to contend with. How much deep, deep, deep joy should be ours that he saved us, that he showed us grace and while this day of grace remains, listen to your pastor, we mourn, we pray, we weep, we witness, we preach for all men everywhere to repent and come to Christ that more unworthy sinners like us might know him. But when he decides that day has ended, we agree with our Father about his judgment also. We agree with him about grace and we will agree with him in judgment. That's all the psalmist is doing.

Let's stand together in prayer.