

Bless the Baby Killers

Psalm 137

INTRODUCTION

- A. Human emotions are powerful.
 - 1. One moment all can be well, and we are happy.
 - 2. The next moment we can be in a state of flux.
- B. We need to remember some things about the psalms.
 - 1. They are poetry.
 - 2. Because they are poetry, they contain much emotive language.
 - a. They often contain hyperbolic language. Therefore, we need to be careful about taking everything literally.
 - b. They contain human emotions.
 - 1) The psalmists don't always say, "This is the right way for one to feel."
 - 2) They simply say, "This is how I feel."

SOMETIMES WE FEEL LIKE CRYING, vv. 1-3

- A. The psalmist sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept, v. 1.
 - 1. The Israelites had been taken into captivity in Babylon.
 - 2. While there God's people sat down by the river and wept.
 - a. The river was a common place for those in deep grief.
 - b. The children of Israel are in deep grief, because they are in a foreign nation.
 - 3. We are allowed to weep.
 - a. We don't always have to feel good.
 - b. Sometimes we need to hurt.
 - c. The children of Israel needed to hurt:
 - 1) God had sent them into captivity on account of their sin.
 - 2) God wanted them to hurt and wanted them to repent.
 - 3) Brethren, when we're in error, we need to hurt.
- B. The children of Israel hung up their harps, vv. 2-3.
 - 1. The children of Israel put their harps on the willows (or poplars).
 - 2. The Babylonians came and tormented the children of Israel, saying, "Sing us a song of Zion!"

SOMETIMES WE DON'T FEEL LIKE SINGING, vv. 4-6

- A. After the Babylonians tormented the children of Israel, the Israelites said, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?"
 - 1. The "Lord's song" probably refers to psalms. The question is, "How can we sing a psalm and praise God in a foreign land?"
 - 2. "Foreign land" refers to an unclean or pagan country (Amos 7:17). The Israelites say, "How can we praise God with a bunch of heathen?"
- B. God's people don't feel like singing.
 - 1. Sometimes we don't feel like singing.
 - 2. James said, "Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise" (Js. 5:13).
 - a. But, sometimes we aren't cheerful.
 - b. Sometimes we don't feel like singing songs of praise.
 - 3. We don't have to hide our feelings and pretend that all is well.

- C. The psalmist needed to remember Jerusalem.
 - 1. If he didn't remember Jerusalem, he prayed that his right hand would wither.
 - a. The right hand was a symbol of strength and of livelihood.
 - b. The psalmist says, "If I forget Jerusalem, let me loose all my strength and not be able to support my family."
 - 2. If he didn't remember Jerusalem, he prayed that his tongue would cleave to the roof of his mouth.
 - a. He prayed that he might become mute if he didn't remember Jerusalem.
 - b. If he didn't remember Jerusalem, he didn't deserve to talk!
 - 3. The psalmist wanted to set Jerusalem above his highest joy.
 - a. Jerusalem was the place where the temple was (it had been burned-2 Ki. 25:9).
 - b. Jerusalem was the place YHWH dwelt.
 - c. The psalmist wanted to remember God's dwelling place.

SOMETIMES WE FEEL LIKE HATING, vv. 7-9

- A. The psalmist wanted YHWH to remember that Edom had done nothing when Babylon
 - 1. The Edomites encouraged the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem.
 - a. They cried out, "Tear it down I Tear it down! Down to its foundations!"
 - b. The idea here is to destroy completely. Actually "lay bare" means "exposing nakedness."
 - 2. The Edomites stood by and watched Judah be taken away (Ob. 11-14).
- B. The psalmist wanted Babylon repaid for what they had done, vv. 8-9.
 - 1. The psalmist prays God's blessing on those who would destroy Babylon, v. 8.
 - 2. The psalmist prays God's blessing on those who would take Babylon's infants and dash them against a rock, v. 9.
 - a. When a nation was overtaken, the victors would often take the losers children and hit them against rocks (2 Ki. 8:12).
 - b. This was done to prevent the other nation from regaining power.
 - 3. The psalmist is praying to God.
 - a. He's asking God's blessing on those who execute justice.
 - b. He remembers that vengeance belongs to YHWH (Dt. 32:35).
 - c. We can never take vengeance into our own hands.
- C. Application:
 - 1. The psalmist dealt with his emotions. He didn't pretend as though they weren't there.
 - 2. We, too, need to deal with our emotions.
 - a. Pretending they aren't there does nothing.
 - b. Dealing with them allows us to get rid of them.