



Approaching God

Begin your time with an opening prayer

Take a moment to quiet your heart and ask God to help you experience his presence today. Ask Him to free you from any distractions as you begin to read and meditate on today's passage.

Psalm 129 - Perseverance

Passage Introduction:

Stick-to-itiveness is one of the more inelegant words in the English language, but I have a special fondness for it. I heard the word a great deal when I was young, mostly, as I recall, from my mother. I was a creature of sudden but short-lived enthusiasms. I had a passion for building model airplanes, and then one day, mysteriously, all desire left and the basement was left littered with half-finished models. Then stamp collecting became an all consuming hobby. I received an immense stamp album for Christmas, joined a philatelic club, acquired piles and piles of stamps, and then one day, unaccountably, the interest left me. It was during these rather frequent transitions from one enthusiasm to another that I was slapped with the reprimand *'Eugene, you have no stick-to-itiveness. You never finish anything.'* Years later I learned that the church had a fancier word for the same thing: *perseverance*. I have also found that it is one of the marks of Christian discipleship and have learned to admire those who exemplify it. Along the way Psalm 129 has gotten included in my admiration.

Eugene Peterson - *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Read the passage slowly 2 or 3x's.

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Psalm 129 - A Song of Ascents (NLT) - **1** From my earliest youth my enemies have persecuted me. Let all Israel repeat this: **2** From my earliest youth my enemies have persecuted me, but they have never defeated me. **3** My back is covered with cuts, as if a farmer had plowed long furrows. **4** But the LORD is good; he has cut me free from the ropes of the ungodly. **5** May all who hate Jerusalem be turned back in shameful defeat. **6** May they be as useless as grass on a rooftop, turning yellow when only half grown, **7** ignored by the harvester, despised by the binder. **8** And may those who pass by refuse to give them this blessing: "The LORD bless you; we bless you in the LORD 's name."

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- Do you think of Christian faith as a fragile style of life that can flourish only when weather conditions are just right, or do you see it as a tough perennial that can stick it out through storm and drought?

- In what areas of life do you most need help from God to persevere? List a few here and then pray through these as you close out your time today.

Psalm 129

Passage Summary - (From The ESV Transformation Bible)

Pilgrims who ascend the pathway to Jerusalem understand that this city and nation have been afflicted from the very beginning by those opposed to the God of Israel. So the psalmist begins, “Greatly have they afflicted me from my youth” (v. 1), personifying the affliction of Israel herself. Yet, despite their regular and severe affliction (v. 3), the enemies of Israel have not prevailed (v. 2), because the Lord has cut the cords the wicked used to hold Israel in bondage (v. 4). This may be a reference to the exodus, where God delivered his people from the bondage of slavery, but it probably refers to this and more. God always protects and preserves his people, and he will save them even from their deepest and most severe bondage. We read these words not only in the context of Israel’s immediate condition but also in the context of God’s wider redemptive plan. As Israel’s Messiah comes, who himself was afflicted beyond description (Isa. 52:14; 53:5, 7), he will deliver them from everlasting affliction (Isa. 53:10–11). With confidence, then, the psalmist declares that all who hate Zion will be put to shame (Ps. 129:5). They will fail in their attempts to destroy the people of God because they will not be able to preserve themselves (vv. 6–8), and God himself will show his continued favor and blessing to his covenant people (vv. 5–8). What grace and power the true God has; his people can always hope and trust in him.

Key Takeaway:

As you read today’s passage, what are 1 or 2 main takeaways that you wrote down that you want to take with you? How would you briefly summarize your observations and meditations for today?

Close in Prayer:

Close by turning today’s Psalm into your own prayer. Write some of your own prayers here using sections of Psalm 129 as a guide using the theme of perseverance.

- vs. **1-3** *From my earliest youth my enemies have persecuted me. Let all Israel repeat this: From my earliest youth my enemies have persecuted me, but they have never defeated me. My back is covered with cuts, as if a farmer had plowed long furrows. (In what ways can you identify with the Psalmist’s pain in the midst of persecution and distress - talk to God about it.)*
- vs. **4-6** *But the LORD is good; he has cut me free from the ropes of the ungodly. May all who hate Jerusalem be turned back in shameful defeat. (Where have you seen the presence of God lately in preserving you, rescuing you and helping you to keep going? Thank God for these areas.)*