

Psalm 137 and the verses no one like to talk about!

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[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

Standing, let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, sometimes your Word completely shocks us. It doesn't say things that we think it should say, and not only does it shock us, Father, but sometimes it confuses us. And Father, if we're honest, sometimes it's a bit of a blow and makes us wonder about the whole Christian thing and knowing you.

So Father, we ask that we thank you for your Word. We know that everything you wrote, you wrote because you love us and you want us to know you better and to follow you and to walk in truth and goodness and beauty. We ask that your Holy Spirit would fall with gentle power, quiet our minds, and help us to receive all that you desire to give us this morning through your Word. And we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated.

[2:05] So, you still see some of these things in the local news, but my wife and I live in one of those parts of Ottawa that had all the Canada Day floods. We, in fact, had a six, seven, eight inches in, in, we live in a semi-detail, a split level. And so the bottom level, we had, I don't know, six, seven, eight inches of water in our basement. And boy, at the time, it felt really hard. And we, you know, I, turns out it happened to all sorts of, all of our neighbors throughout the neighborhood. And Louise and I now really think that God was very kind to us in terms of the limited amount of damage that we had. But I think it was the day after I decided to look at my insurance policy to see if the flood was covered. Good Lord, I think that was written by a lawyer to confuse you so you couldn't understand it. I have the vaguest, I have, I have the vaguest idea in the world whether I would have been covered for anything that happened to me. Now, as it turns out, we didn't need it. But I mention all of this because one of the things about our church is that I want to be a church where there's never buyer's regret. So, you know, if I thought that I had some money coming because of my insurance and it turns out I had none, there'd be some regret about it. And I want us to be a, I believe

Christianity is true. I think it's good. I think it's beautiful. I think Jesus really did rise from the dead. I think he died on the cross because he loves you. And I think he is calling you to be his child and to follow him and that God desires you to be not only in union with Christ but to be in union with him and to grow in beatitude. And I believe all of those things. And so I don't want there to be things that come up. Some of you might, if you have friends who are ex-evangelicals or skeptics, they might throw this text at you. And so that's why we're looking at it. When I, in our summer psalm series this year, all of the speakers were to choose between 120 and 150.

And I chose last. And I always look through those psalms just to make sure there's some balance to what people pick. But if there's a psalm which is really problematic, I make sure that I'm going to preach on it because it's partly how I help you as the congregation to read the Bible and to have a confidence in it. So that's why we're looking at this psalm. There might be a couple of other times in this sermon where it's a bit gruesome. I'm not going to apologize for it, but I am going to let you

know there's some things in there that might be a little bit gruesome to you. I mean, we already got it, right? So what we're going to do, by the way, like as I, you know, as I like worked on this psalm this week, like I realize how important this psalm is and how important the hard bits of the Bible are for Christians if we want to grow and know more about ourselves and more about God. But I'll show you what I mean. So get out your Bibles. It's helpful to me and helpful to you. If you're going to learn how to read the Bible for yourselves, it's helpful if you have a Bible with you. Just let you know that if you can't read your phone without being distracted by Facebook or TikTok or Instagram, there's this weird invention called paper books. And what you should do is bring one of a paper book with you on Sunday.

If you can look at it online, but, and without being distracted, then that's fine. But I invite you to take your Bible so you can read for yourself and see if I'm skipping things or twisting things or anything like that. And it's Psalm 137. And what we're going to do is I'm going to read the whole psalm again. We're going to look and spend a couple of minutes in that really hard part at the end.

And then I'm going to read this whole psalm again, but go a bit slower and explain some of the language and the imagery to you. What I can tell you right now, though, is that I do spend time looking in commentaries to look in the original languages. This is a well-translated psalm.

[6:07] It's not going to be one of those cases that I say, oh, well, if you actually read in the original language, it doesn't mean this. No, no, no. This is a very well-translated psalm. So it says what it says. So let's hear it together.

By the waters of Babylon there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our leers, for there our captors were quiet of the songs and our tormentors, mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth. If I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy." Now just sort of pause here.

Even without necessarily knowing what the symbolism is and historical context, you can really, I think, hopefully capture the first part of the psalm in particular has been well beloved by Christians. It captures deep emotion and longings and yearnings and there's just something heart-tugging about that part.

And then it takes this sudden turn. You have this profoundly emotional, sad, and yet longing psalm, and then this dark turn. Look at verse 7. Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites, the day of Jerusalem, how they said, lay it bare, lay it bare down to its foundations, O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed.

Blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us. Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rocks. And as I said, that's well translated.

[8:08] So, like, whoa, right? Whoa. Not, not whoa is in terms of whoa is me, but whoa, like, what on earth is going on here? I could well imagine people hearing this for the first time. I think of some of the people I share about Christianity with, who know that I'm a Christian, they probably would say, I could never accept a book from God that would have something like that. And I could never, if you say that God wrote that and he wrote it as something for us that we can pray, I could never worship a God that would say something like that.

And, in fact, I might even say, George, this is barbaric. Like, do you pray like this? Is that what you actually do? So, what's going on? So, one of the things, one of the ways, not the only way, but one of the ways to understand what the Bible is, is it's ultimately a word from God. Every word is, every individual word in the sentence and the paragraphs, the whole bit, it's all God's word. And part of what the Bible is, is both a mirror to help us understand ourselves and a window to help us understand who God is and what he's done in Christ and what he's calling us to. That's one way to understand what the Bible is.

Not the only way, but it's an important way. It's a mirror and a window. And so, when we read this again, here's the problem. Almost every single Canadian agrees with verse 9.

They say, no, no, George. Bashing babies' heads against, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, George. Like, virtually no Canadian agrees with that. And I say that almost every Canadians agree with this. It wouldn't matter if I'm in the hippest, trendiest coffee shop, which I couldn't tell you what it is because I'm closer to hip replacement than hip. And I have no idea what that would really be, unless one somebody told me. But whether it's a Tim Hortons, like the one just down the street with lots of street people, Canadians agree with this. They say, no, they don't. Yes, they do.

[10:10] What's one of the most popular types of YouTube videos? Instant karma. You know what that is? Instant karma is where you maybe have somebody having road rage and they're exploding in anger.

And then the next thing you see is that there's a cop car behind them. And the person having road rage is arrested. And it's called instant karma. But what is it that most Canadians would agree as a fundamental moral principle?

What goes around? You know, what you do is going to happen to you. Isn't that what most Canadians think? That's what most Canadians think.

So look at verse 8 and 9 again more slowly. Why is it that the psalmist prays verse 9? Look at verse 8. O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us.

What did the Babylonians do to them? They took their babies and smashed their heads against the rocks. And what the psalmist is praying is what goes around comes around.

[11:32] Now, I think like most people, we're a bit shocked with this. You see, often what happens is that we miss the opportunity for the Bible to be a mirror to help us to understand what we actually say and what we actually think.

And I think most of us would want to sputter and try to make some exceptions about it. But what the Bible does here is vastly better and vastly wiser. Vastly better and vastly better.

In fact, what often happens is because we get caught up with the problem and don't have any self-awareness, we miss the opportunity of the psalm.

So now let's go back and read the psalm from the beginning. But if we read it from the beginning, I think maybe the way it was designed was that we go, whoa, what's that last line? Let me read this over again.

And now if we read it over again in light of the last line and the line just before that, now there's an opportunity for us to have a profound empathy. See, one of the functions of literature in general, whether it's poetry or like books, stories, is that it allows us, when it's well done, to enter into the lived experience of other people, that's empathy, and then have compassion on them.

[12:44] So let's now take this opportunity and reread the psalm in light of what has happened to the person who's written the psalm. Go back to verse 1. By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion.

Now, Babylon's... So what's partially happened here is... It's not partially. What's happened is that in 586 B.C., Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar, has destroyed Jerusalem and conquered the nation of Israel.

And the nation of Israel will not be a nation again. In fact, they won't fundamentally be a nation for centuries and centuries and centuries and centuries and centuries, but they're destroyed. Jerusalem is destroyed.

And many of the people from Israel, who haven't died in the conquest, have been taken back to Babylon. It's an attempt to completely cut off their ties to that original land.

And that historically happened. And what happened, though, bits and pieces like this, is that Babylon ended up becoming what I would call a synecdoche, which is a really, really weird, rare word that virtually nobody ever uses, a synecdoche.

[13:58] I'm probably not pronouncing it really correctly. And what that is, is, like, if I say Wall Street, you all know that I'm not actually talking about a street in New York City.

I'm talking about capitalism. I'm talking about America and economic might. If I say Hollywood, I'm not just talking about a little neighborhood in the greater Los Angeles area.

I'm talking about movies and all of that type of thing, right? Bay Street, the same type of thing. You know, Parliament, you're talking about government and all of those types of things. And Babylon ends up becoming in the Bible.

After this time, if you read the Old Testament prophets, you read the New Testament, even in the Old Testament, who shows up in the Old Testament is the whore of Babylon. And it becomes a symbol.

So that to say it, you're not just thinking of something that happened in history once and a place on the planet. Babylon represents and is a short form for concentrated human and demonic power, organized, active, against, and hostile to the Lord and to his people.

[15:05] That's what Babylon is. Babylon is a concentration of human and demonic power that's hostile to the triune God and is active against the triune God, not just sort of sitting there passive-aggressive, but active-aggressive against the triune God and his people.

And that's what Babylon ends up representing. It is in a... And so that's partially how when we now read it, I mean, obviously, the person writing this psalm wouldn't know that that was God was setting the stage for Babylon.

It's part of the wisdom of God causing Scripture to be written that this word that is, for him, a specific historical event. He is... In fact, it's so moving. If you realize that what's happened is the person and the group of people singing this, they are sitting in the center of the people who have conquered them.

And they are in a place of beauty. I mean, many of us on our holidays, we want to go to water because there's something restful and beautiful about water, about beautiful waterways and rivers and all of the flourishing that goes with it, irrigating of land for flowers and trees and fruit and beauty and birds and bees.

We're going to the ocean and there they are in a place of profound beauty where the Babylonian people would think it was an honor that they could go and wander amongst that and see it.

[16:31] And they are sitting there weeping because they remember Zion. Now, I'm going to explain Zion imagery in a moment. You'll explain why that's an important word.

But they're there weeping. And then, so what do they do? And the problem isn't that they're, they can't, the point of the psalm isn't, listen, stop, don't remember Zion.

It only makes you sad. Forget Zion and be happy. No, no, part of this is sometimes we need to remember even when it makes us sad because as we'll see in a moment, that remember, this particular remembering is really important in terms of them turning their complete life around.

Look what happens in verse 2 and 3 first, though. On the willows there we hung up our leers, like a type of guitar slash harp. On the willows there we hung up our leers, for there are captors required of us songs and our tormentors mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.

I'm going to say it. All week as I've been working on this psalm, I've just been back thinking of the video footage that came out after that horrendous attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

[17:57] And part of what was so horrendous about that was not only what they did, but the fact that they were so proud of it, so gleeful about it.

And the video footage of them bringing women who'd been raped and murdered in the backs of trucks, and they howl with delight and old men and old women and young children and young men and women all clapping and cheering and laughing of what has happened.

It is so horrific. And so how do we read these verses 2 and 3? They've had their babies heads bashed in.

And they are in the place where even if the people around them hadn't done it, they have no shame. They have no guilt.

They have no embarrassment. They are proud of it. They are gleeful about it. And they want to rub their noses in it. You see, if you understand what's happened at the end of the psalm, it opens the door for you to enter into it emotionally.

[19:13] And that's why you can't read this psalm. For me, I couldn't read it without thinking of what happened on October 7, 2023 to the Jewish people. So they're there.

They're surrounded by people. And it's actually very interesting. The word tormentors there. You see the word tormentors in verse 3? I can't remember the name of it.

There's a literary term for it. But it's the only place in the Old Testament, and I think the only place in ancient Jewish literature where this word appears. So that's why you'll see some translations translated a little bit differently.

But where the word comes from, part of the image behind the word is literally just like seeing those scenes in Gaza where the people are cheering and whooping.

I'm not recommending you see this movie, but there was a movie that came out a little while ago starring Charlize Theron about a kayaker and she ends up being chased by this really, really crazy guy. And there's a scene in there, a crazy evil guy who wants to kill her.

[20:16] And there's a scene in there regularly where he's howling. Howling. And that's the word tormentor there. It has added this idea of howling. Think of Western movies where you have the bad, the terrible, the evil rancher coming to an innocent homesteader and they've just burned the

house down and killed the dad and all of that.

And the cowboys are running around howling in glee and excitement about the evil that they're inflicting. And that's the root of the word tormentor. This psalm, once you realize what the ending is and these people are sitting there and they are surrounded by people continuing to howlingly, laughingly mock them.

Sing us one of the songs of Zion. And you also actually see there part of the importance of the word remember. You see there the beginning of their internal freedom and defiance.

Because what did they do? Hung up their harps. Not going to do it. What are you going to do us? Bash my kids' heads in against rocks?

You've already done that to me. Not going to do it. And then it turns into this thing of longing and yearning. Look at verses the next section.

[21 : 41] The psalm is three triplets. One to three, four to six, and then seven to nine. Each one two lines. And look what happens. Look how it moves into something that ends up into longing.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Now just, I'm going to talk about this more in a moment, but notice the end of verse three. Sing us one of the songs of Zion. Verse four, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?

To sing a song of Zion and to sing the Lord's song is to sing the same thing. But partly how we start to understand what's going on here. If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill.

Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth. If I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy. You know, when you tell people, you know, forget about it.

Stop thinking about that and move on. You ask them to forget about it because you ask them to do something. If you ask people to remember something, like remember who you are, remember what you're called, remember the mission, it's you remember to do something.

[22 : 42] And that's the same thing which is going on here. And they're saying that they want, and so what's going on here is Zion and Jerusalem and the Lord.

It's in this particular context, it's another synoptic. It's on one hand, of course, Zion is a mountain. On the other, and one hand, Jerusalem is a particular place. But in this particular case, it connected with the Lord. It's a bigger reality. It's referring to that place where God is personally present, His loyal love is experienced, His rule and affection for you is experienced under His sovereign rule, and that's what's being represented here by the words Jerusalem and Zion.

And that's why if you look at verse 6 when it says, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy, that's why it's not blasphemy. You see, for an Orthodox Jew and for us as a Christian, if we were to say that Jerusalem should be our highest joy, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

The Lord should be our highest joy. So that's why the Jerusalem, Zion, the Lord, they're all intertwined here and it's a synecdoche and it's depicting something very, very, very profound.

[24 : 07] And it's something which I've noticed has been happening in small ways in our culture. I've had, I know of people who have become Christians over the last seven or eight years and part of the reason they have become Christians is because there is so much evil going on in our world and rather than evil making them think that God doesn't exist, it leads them to think God has to exist.

Evil can't be the ultimate thing. And these people have experienced something completely horrendous. They've seen their friends and neighbors killed, they've seen their children killed in a very, very cruel way.

They are in captivity, they are being tormented and this experience of profound evil is said, above the evil, above the fog, above the clouds, there must be the sun.

there must be God. There has to be God. And I mean, on one level we can say that the highest joy for every person is an empirical thing, we could figure out what anybody's highest joy is, but we all understand and this is something that's hard for Canadians.

Canadians on one hand, I think the average secular Canadian doesn't believe there is really anything transcendent, but on the other hand they also wish that there was. that there was a highest joy that really deserves to be our highest joy.

[25 : 42] And what a way to describe the true and living God, the good, the true, and the beautiful, who is God where my highest joy is. What is it partially about to become a Christian?

Partly what it means to be a Christian is to be so trained by the word and so encouraged by the Christian community and so gripped with their memory of the gospel that God begins to grow within

you an ever deeper longing and yearning for the highest joy.

To make our realization that any joy is good, but beyond the joy of joy of joys of joys is the highest joy of joy.

It's not just something completely irrelevant because above the pain, above the evil, above the devil, above Babylon, the true and living God exists and in his presence is the fullness of joy. Why did Jesus go to the cross? For the joy set before him in obedience to God, the joy that he desires you and me to enter into in union with him.

[27:06] But meanwhile, there is the weeping, but their weeping has turned to longing. Now we look at just a couple of lessons from that final part, the hard part.

It takes a very, as I said, dark turn. It's interesting, this psalm, but, you know, by the way, one of the byproducts of this psalm for us is that, especially with lots of new Canadians coming amongst us, but it doesn't even have to be new Canadians.

It could be that we might know people and not realize that, you know, that seemingly well put together woman or maybe a woman who doesn't seem to be very well put together, a man, that they endured decades of sexual abuse or some other type of abuse when they were younger and endured some horrendous pain, which is just, thank be to God, I never had to endure.

But we can have people coming from northern Nigeria or other parts of the world who have endured horrendous evil. And this psalm is partially a call for us to be aware of the fact that this is really in the world and to pray that God would make us the type of person that that person who just needs to be able to share with somebody who isn't going to give them a glib answer but is willing to just hold their hand and let them weep while you pray for them in your mind.

That's the type of people God wants us to be in Christ. Because there are people in the world who have experienced shocking evil.

[29:06] One of the things that this psalm does as we go into these last three verses, I'll just read it and I'm going to say a few more things. Remember, Lord, against the Edomites. Who are the Edomites? The Edomites are like a code word in the Bible for people who they're the fellow travelers of Babylon.

They have a historic hatred of God's people. Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites the day of Jerusalem how they said, lay it bare, lay it bare, tear it down to its foundations.

O daughter of Babylon doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us. Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock. This is a constant testimony against the glib podcasters and commentators who try to act as if there is not real deep, deep horrific evil in the world.

Verse 9 is prayed because that verse 8 reveals what the Babylonians have done to the person praying. You know, so there's several things sort of in closing about this.

[30:21] One of the things that we have problems with, remember I said at the beginning, I think if I was to share this scripture text with some of the people that I feel that are comfortable enough with me, I know of, you know, one or two people in particular who I think would maybe ask me if I read that psalm to them, George, is that what you pray, verse 9, before you could explain what was going on?

Because I think a lot of people think that the normal way you should respond to the Bible is to say, therefore go and do this. That's not the normal way that you respond to the Bible.

You do this when there's a command, but there's a lot of other things going on in the Bible, but the more telling thing about it when we read the Bible is to ask this question, is it I, Lord?

Is it me? So for some of us, because we all know that part of the problem is that, I mean, I know this very personally in terms of my own family, is that churches can be a place where there is horrific evil done by pastors or Sunday school teachers or people in the church in terms of sexual abuse and to hear this psalm, it's an opportunity from God for us to say, is it I, Lord?

And if it is, if I'm that tormentor, if I have a problem with mocking, maybe not as extreme as this, but of really mocking, is it I, Lord? And then if it is, if the Holy Spirit convicts you, it is, to call out to him, to pause in the service and to call out to him, Lord, have mercy upon me.

[31:55] Please help me to put this to death in me. Help me to repent of it. Help me to make an amendment of life as much as I can and turn and talk and live a different way.

Am I the one consumed with such hatred? The other thing is that if you're the one who's been really broken, by this horrendous evil, to realize that this psalm is a message to you that God knows your

pain and he's encouraging you to call out to him in prayer without holding back and without filtering. See, God's a big God. If you say things that aren't theologically correct or aren't really the right way to do it or too bold or, you know, too plain, he's not like talking to a human being who might get offended.

He hears. He processes. He, he, I mean, he'll just say no to some of the things. But you, you have permission to pray and you have permission to ask the Lord to show you people in the body of Christ that you can maybe reveal a little bit about the horror that you experienced so that you can sit with them and weep.

see, that's why churches that do this psalm and never do the last two verses are not helping the congregation at all. It's in the hard bits that you really get the hard bits that you need about yourself.

[33:32] The other thing about this psalm is that it, it, it's a, there's another way that it's a bit of a mirror to us. I have to be careful here of my time. I'm, I'm, I'm moving on, but, you know, we could look at this and say, so, so part of the, here's part of the problem when we pray.

So we should pray, for instance, there's horrific things going on in northern Nigeria, absolutely horrific things. Islamist warlords going after Christians, killing, burning, raping, kidnapping, all that horrific, horrific thing.

We should pray that that is brought to an end. But we don't realize is praying that it's brought to an end might mean that Nigerian special forces go and kill them.

We go, oh, and part of what this psalm does is it makes you realize what you're actually praying for. You know, if you pray that people, you know, in the Pakistan intelligence services who hunt down Christians and then do horrific things to them, if you pray for them to, to, to stop and to be converted, you're actually praying that they will turn their heart, but when they turn their heart and become a Christian, they'll end up being killed themselves.

Like, but, but Bible's not saying, it just brings out more clearly what we're praying for, but it doesn't tell us to stop praying. We always pray for justice. We always pray for deliverance. That's what we pray.

[34:58] This is just being a little bit more specific about what it means that they get what they deserve without us really fully thinking about it. it, it, it, it helps us to think about it, but not, not in a way that's depressing, but connected to longings and yearnings.

But, we could wonder how is it that a person could go from such deep longings and yearnings to the highest joy to praying in such a dark manner? Well, I can tell you how to find a person like that very easily so you can actually talk to them about why it is that somebody can go from such high thoughts to such dark thoughts in a moment.

When you leave here, go home and look in a mirror and you'll meet that person. Say, no, no, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, think about it.

How is it that we can go from listening to praise music and just we're, you know, maybe when my wife's here but if she's not home and I'm hearing some certain happy praise music I'm doing a little bit of a dance.

Really embarrassing, terrible dancing by the way. I would get so red if anybody saw me. How is it I could go from something like that to saying something cutting ten minutes later?

[36:15] Why is it that that's where how is it that human beings can go from maybe sitting and seeing the most spectacular sunset coming out over the Rockies and then 15 minutes later having a terrible fight with another person?

What is it about a human being that there's such a riddle? And the Bible describes it human beings on one hand because we were made for God we have a longing and yearning for God but at the same time we want to do evil things at the same time we want to hide from him and in some ways this psalm is also describing the riddle of what it means to be human and it also then ultimately shows us something about the need that we have how can somebody who has such a mystery and so odd and so riddled in a sense ever be saved?

Well that's the beauty of who Christ is. This psalm is sitting up before us the riddle of what it means to be human the riddle of profound evil and we realize that some evil the just result the just punishment for that evil should be death and we might not think our just evil that we've done deserves death but maybe we've never looked at the cumulative effect of it or listened to all of the people whom we were hurt.

If you live to be as long as old as I am and if God was to list all of the people over the years even though they've forgiven me the hurt that I've done maybe you would say that something like death

George maybe that does right for you.

Jesus is the only one he is God's son he can stand for all he is the new Adam he is the only one whose longing and yearning for God as the highest joy never faltered and he is the only one whose life never took a dark turn he is the only one who could possibly stand in our place and when the Bible says that he's been tempted in every way as we are without sin he understands the power of those desires to pray for vengeance and he never succumbed to it and so it's only in union with him that I can really have the punishment that I deserve dealt with only in him and that leads to my very final point if this psalm was the only psalm the only passage in the entire Bible that talked about things like this then that's how we should pray verses 8 and 9 but it's not the only one the resurrection the death and resurrection of Jesus changes everything so you should always pray for justice you know you should pray not only that those forces of evil and wickedness in northern Nigeria that they stop you should pray we should pray that they are defeated and are no more that is a good thing for Christians to pray but because of Christ there is another part that they don't know in this psalm but we know is that we should also pray for their conversion if we remember before God the persecuted church we should pray that their tormentors will stop will turn but we should also and we should feel free to pray that they get what they deserve but we should also pray that they get what they don't deserve what no human being deserves which is grace and receiving grace doesn't mean that you still don't get what you deserve

[39:38] I think I have you with me I'm going to give you two or three more minutes so there's a very interesting fellow by the name of David Woods who he's the fellow who was used by God to bring Nabeel Qureshi to Christ if you haven't read the spectacular book Seeking Allah Finding Jesus by Nabeel Qureshi you should read that book very very very good book and David Woods was a guy who was used by God to have Nabeel come to Christ from a devout Muslim family but how David Woods became a Christian is amongst other things is he was in jail because he attempted to kill his stepfather and while he's in jail and he's an atheist and he thinks Christians are the biggest morons in the world in jail he ends up being becoming like a cellmate and a friend with this fellow who had committed a whole pile of crimes gotten away from gotten away with all of them became a Christian and then realized that he had to go to the police and he turned himself in and pled guilty and David Woods thought this guy was the biggest moron in the world and so he delighted that he would try to defeat that guy from being a Christian now as it turned out it ended up that God used that guy that David Woods became a Christian but the point is this if we had a death row in Canada it's completely appropriate for me to go and visit somebody on death row and hope and pray that they would become a Christian but because they become a Christian doesn't mean they don't suffer the consequences of what they've done on this side of the grave and so it is how do we pray

Father for those in northern Nigeria who are hounding our brothers and sisters in Christ and not just our brothers and sisters in Christ but others and urging and killing them and doing horrific things to them Father we pray that they will be defeated we pray that they will stop we pray that they will and we also pray that they will come to Christ that's how we pray because we read Psalm 137 as followers of Jesus I invite you to stand bow our heads in prayer Father this is this is on one hand a very hard word but a word we need to know and so Father we ask that when we come across those parts of your word that really are hard help us Father just to remember Jesus and his resurrection and his death for us and his love for us and trust that even though it seems hard at first this is a good word for us that we need to hear and we need to learn and help us Father even when we're reading some of the worst parts of the Bible

Father may we be open to your Holy Spirit convicting us of sin for us to say is it I Lord have I done this and Father we give you thanks and praise that the gospel that knowing Jesus died for us that everything that we've ever done wrong has been dealt with in him that he paid the penalty for that and when we're in union with him Father that we are completely and utterly forgiven and the price is completely paid Father that is such a profound truth such an undeserved gift and make the gospel so real to us Father that we are emotionally and intellectually able to start to look at those things in our lives for which we need to repent and amend our lives and help us Father in your mercy and in your kindness in the power of the Holy Spirit as your word has more hole on us as the gospel becomes more real Father help us to amend our lives help us to make amends help us to repent and fill our hearts Father with an ever deeper longing and yearning to be in your presence where there is a fullness of joy and we thank you Father that in Christ that fullness of joy is the final word

about us and we ask these things and pray these things in the name of Jesus your Son and our Savior and all God's people said

[illegible]