

## THE AFFLICTIONS OF ZION

*“Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth”...Let Israel now say...”Many a time they have afflicted me from my youth; yet they have not prevailed against me.”* (Psalm 129:1-2)

The question may well be asked of this Psalm of Ascents, “where is the progress here”. It seems the apex of blessedness has been realized in Psalm 128. The benefits and blessedness upon the godly and obedient have been fully explored and expounded all the way down to daily domestic life. How can it get any better than that?

We could hardly be more wrong than to leave this rosey picture without the realities of Zion’s battles and persecutions. A “man” is spoken of here, but it is evident that spiritual Israel, Zion, the church of the living God, is in view. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:15 that God has in Christ made of Jew and Gentile “one new man”. God has put enmity between the serpent (Satan) and the seed of woman (Christ). Unrelenting attacks from this malignant and venomous beast shall be the continual lot of the Body of Christ. He will ever be bruising His heel. It is an article of her validation that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (II Tim. 3:12). That which professes to be Christian without such assaults from the wicked are false. If persecution does not arise from the world, society and state, it will arise from within Christendom itself, even, as Paul warned the Ephesian elders, “from your own midst”. A split in a church, a grievous wound may not be a reproach but a confirmation and means of its purity.

This persecution and affliction has ever been. *“From my youth”*. It began with righteous Abel, surfaced immediately in the Old Testament righteous elect, in Israel as a people, but more particular in the Prophets, those sent forth with God’s law and redemptive call. It fell with unmatched vehemence upon Lamb of God, upon His Apostles and immediately upon the fledgling church. It yet survives today in every child of God. Our history is as predictable as the testimony of our past. The seasoned mature saint may now say as in Psalm 124, *“Let Israel now say”*.

These persecutors are “plowers”. In close proximity, they do not shoot arrows from afar, but are often those close to our bosoms, thus taking us unawares, and making the assaults and injuries more painful. They dig, tear, root up and disturb. As grievous as all this is, it is necessary for our fruitfulness. Fallow ground must be broken up, or ever lie barren. Without purifying fires, the refiner will never see His image in the gold.

They are often at it. *“Many a time”*. We soon forget them, but they keep coming. They never prevail! They have not, and they will not. That is why the Christian church has never had or needed a revival or a reformation. The gates of hell cannot prevail against it. Like grass growing in the sod on the rooftop, these enemies of righteousness spring up and flourish quickly, then wither and die. Zion’s enemies will be found to have only been God’s means of perfecting His saints. He gathers wheat, not grass, into His barn. - C. M.