

Exalting Jesus Above My Chief Joy

By Bob Larsen

“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.”

(Psalm 137:1-6)

When I played in a Gospel band, it was wonderful to worship the Lord with our instruments. We used to go to a coffee house in Fargo, North Dakota, about once every other month. It was my favorite place to play. One time when we were there, I had just read Psalm 137. I thought to myself, “What if captors took us and demanded us to ‘Sing us one of the songs of Jesus?’” Would we say, “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” The Israelites in this Psalm were under the Babylonian captivity. They longed to return to Jerusalem to worship their Lord. They would come to Jerusalem to worship. We come to Jesus to worship. Then I saw a parallel.

Would we say in our captivity, “If I forget you, O Jesus, let my right hand forget its skill; if I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth; if I do not exalt Jesus above my chief joy?” Whenever I read this Psalm, I examine myself. Can I still say that I exalt Jesus above my chief joy, and if I do not, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth? It is my desire that Jesus, the One who gave His life for me, would always be exalted above my chief joy. I am hoping that you all feel the same way.