

Psalm 130

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[0 : 00] 4. Let's read. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than the watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, put your hope in the Lord. For with the Lord is unfailing love, and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Well, I'm going to ask Michael. He's going to come up now and preach this morning. Well, before we look at this psalm, let's pray together. Lord, we thank you that you've given us your word. We thank you for the words of the psalmist all those years ago. We pray, O Lord, that you will speak to each one of us as individuals and corporately as we look together at these ancient words, that they might become relevant to our own lives, to our own experience. And we pray, O Father God, that if we are in the depths this morning as the psalmist was, so we will put our hope in the Lord. Lord, help us to this end, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Well, Psalm 130 is a psalm we're looking at, and I'm told that it was Luther's, one of Luther's favorite psalms. He liked this psalm very much. He was prone to despair with all the things that were going on at the time of the Reformation and all the battles he had to fight. And so he often found himself in the depths. Another writer has spoken about this psalm as being like steps to heaven.

He likens the psalm to a spiritual barometer. You know, before we had the internet and we could look up the five-day forecast, you had the barometer and it marked the pressures that were going on and what the weather was likely to be over the coming days. Well, certainly the psalmist begins right in the depths. Spiritually, things are very, very low. It's as though, spiritually speaking, the clouds are touching the ground. And out of those depths, he cries to the Lord. He cries to his God.

[3 : 40] But you also notice, as you look at this psalm, that there is not just that spiritual barometer, but there is also the progression in the psalm. Because as the psalmist comes to the end of this short psalm, he is in heaven, as it were, as he looks for that full redemption that the Lord will redeem Israel from all their sins. So he has come through the darkness of the first verse to the unfailing love of the Lord and the full redemption that is promised to all God's people in the glory of heaven. It's a song of ascent.

You know, these were psalms that were sung as the pilgrims made their way up to Jerusalem.

There's a number of them here, all linked together, a song of ascent.

They were sung by the pilgrims as they made their way up to Jerusalem at the various festivals, at Passover, for example. This was a psalm that would have been sung by Jesus himself as he made his way up to the temple. He also would have been singing along with David of old and the other psalmists who penned these psalms. And it is a song of progression. It is a song of ascent. There's a rising note in it. Out of the depths I cry. And then the redemption of Israel. And I thought of the Lord Jesus singing this psalm and how he would have thought about it. He would cry out of the depths.

If there be any other way, let this cup pass from me, we're told. And his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Out of the depths he cried. Not because of sin, but for your sins and for my sins he cried out. And he knew that through his death there would be that full redemption. He would redeem Israel from all their sins. So it's a psalm of ascent. It's a psalm that rises. And I trust as we go through it, we too will rise, as it were, with wings like eagles. And we shall run and not be weary and walk and not faint. So let's divide the psalm. And we're going to divide it into four parts. And they divide easily for us into two verses each. The first part is desiring. And we have that in verses one and two. And I think we have here the desire of true prayer to God. Well, what was

happening to the psalmist as he penned these words? Well, we can't be absolutely certain, but certainly there was a trial of one sort or another. Perhaps he was surrounded by enemies. Perhaps death stared him in the face. Perhaps there was a pressure of family life. Perhaps there was illness. Perhaps there were national difficulties if David is the psalmist. All of these were the psalmist. All of these were reasons for him to cry out to God. But I think the emphasis lies in another direction. I think in some way or another he had failed the Lord. There was sin in his life. I think there was something that had happened, something that he had done that caused him to cry out from the depths of his being in true prayer as he desires God to intervene because of this sin that was in his life.

And as he prays, we learn something of what it means to cry out to God as we sin and as we fail him. Notice that his prayer here is fervent. I cry to you. He desires God. His desire is directed to God, to you, O Lord.

[8 : 28] Now we have the slogans, don't we? Prayer changes things. We hear about the power of prayer. But so often when faith is weak, particularly when we are in the depths, we find it perhaps difficult to pray. And sometimes at that particular time the Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that can't be uttered. But the Lord knows our hearts. And he knows there is this desire to seek him to seek him to you, O Lord. It's not our prayers that will change the situation. It is God who changes situation. It is God who intervenes on our behalf when we are in the depths. He's desiring God to do it.

As he comes, he sees who God is. He is the Lord. He is Jehovah. He is the Creator. He is the One of Almighty power. And as he cries, he says, O Lord, hear my voice. And he's absolutely dependent.

He needs mercy. And only the Lord can provide that mercy. So we have, first of all, the desire of true prayer. But then there's this desire that I want to emphasize to be heard. He wants to be heard above everything else. He's a little bit like that blind man that we read of in Luke chapter 18 and verses 35 to 43.

He has heard about Jesus. People were speaking about Jesus. And he desires the Lord Jesus because he is passing by. And he cries out because he wants to see. But others are saying, be quiet. Don't disturb him.

Don't make this fuss. But he cries out all the more. He won't be silent because he's desperate. And that's the psalmist in the depths. Oh, Lord, hear my voice. Let your ear be attentive to my cry for mercy.

[11 : 10] He wants to be heard above everything else. Spurgeon has a little remark in his commentary on this psalm by saying this.

It is all we ask. It is all we ask. And nothing less will content us. If the Lord will but hear us, we will leave it to his superior wisdom to decide whether he answers us or no. It is better for our prayer to be heard than answered. Have you ever thought of that? Sometimes we can ask for all the wrong reasons, can't we? And when we're in the depths, the Lord is teaching us. And he may not always bring us out of the depths. But in those depths, he is teaching us.

And he allows us to go through these difficulties, these trials that we might learn of him. But he is hearing us.

And if he is saying no to our requests, it is because of his superior wisdom. So the psalmist's desire is that he might be heard. And notice too, in these verses, it's a desire that continues.

Now in our NIVs, his prayers are in the singular. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you have the ESV in front of you, it says this.

[12 : 57] Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. And if you have the authorized version, it says, Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

In other words, it's not just one fleeting prayer. In the depths, he is crying out. And he's crying out again. And he's crying out the more.

That the Lord will hear him. That the Lord will come to his aid. It is, if you like, the asking and the seeking and the knocking of prayer.

Nothing will satisfy him apart from the Lord. He knows, even though he is in the depths, that God is gracious.

That God is merciful. That his mercies are new every day. And he desires that mercy. How it will be shown.

[14 : 00] Well, he's content to leave that with God. But he keeps on calling out. How great is our desire for God.

Are we a people that cast our cares upon the Lord? Do we long to be heard?

And how consistent is our praying? Do we cry to him in the depths? Do we desire him?

And if we're correct, that this is a psalm that was written because of some sin on his part, do we see the seriousness of sin that will want us to call out to him that we might know his forgiveness because we have sinned against him.

And perhaps we don't call out sometimes like the psalmist because we have failed to see the seriousness of sin. David elsewhere says, Against thee, you only have I sinned.

[15 : 21] So there's a desiring of prayer in verses 1 and 2. Secondly, we have him reflecting in verses 3 and 4.

To you, O Lord, if you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, therefore you are feared.

He's in the depths, almost certainly because of sin. The temptation, of course, would be for him to despair. God will never listen to me.

But the psalmist does know something of the grace of God and he reflects upon that in verse 3. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who can stand?

And he knows the answer to that question. He answers, in effect, that nobody could stand. He's conscious, you see, of his own sins.

[16 : 26] He's in the depths because of them. And he's also aware of God's holiness and his own unrighteousness. How can he come before God?

How can he stand before the Lord God Almighty? You see, it's not just his present sins, whatever they were.

They're all his past sins. And the list is long. He could go back and think of his childhood and how he'd failed the Lord in his childhood.

He could look at his adolescence. And he could see the depth of his sins, how far he had gone. And as an adult, he had failed the Lord again and again.

O Lord, if you kept a record of my sins, O Lord, who could stand? The list is long. No one could stand. But there's no one that does good, not even one.

[17 : 34] Not one sin. A past the eye of God. For he is the omniscient one. He sees all and knows all.

What hope does he have of God hearing his voice? If every time he cried to God, God took out his book and recited his sins and his failures.

And the same would be true of every one of us here this morning. What hope would we have? Who could stand? No, we're all guilty.

We've all fallen short. But there's the grace of God and he reflects upon this. You see, he's not coming to plead his righteousness, his own righteousness, for he has none.

He's not come pleading his own good works. His hope is in the graciousness of Jehovah, his God.

[18 : 38] The one who wipes the slate completely clean. The psalmist would have thought of the sacrifices that were made.

Perhaps he would think of the Day of Atonement and the priest laying his hand on the scapegoat and that scapegoat being released into the wilderness.

Perhaps he would think of a personal sacrifice that he had taken to the temple. And his sins had been laid upon that bullock. And the bullock had been slaughtered in his place.

Yes, God was a God of grace and the sacrificial system pointed to that. But again and again the psalmists, of course, look forward to the coming of the Messiah.

Messiah. As Psalm 22 they pierced his hands and his feet. And it is on this basis that we can come.

[19 : 51] And as the psalmist look forward to the coming of Christ so we look back and see that Christ has come. That grace might be given to you and me. And that the slate can be wiped clean.

So that even when we sin and fail after we become Christians there is forgiveness for us. Oh that we might reflect upon God's graciousness.

That we might marvel to this morning that he is ready to hear our cries from the depths. Oh that we might marvel that we can come before him in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conscious yes of our sin but conscious also of the fact that the Lord is there for us. You see as he meditates upon these things as he reflects on God's graciousness he also sees wonderfully the

forgiveness of God.

For with you he says in verse 4 there is forgiveness therefore you are feared. He plumbed the depths of sin but God is gracious and because he is gracious he forgives utterly and completely. [21 : 19] he reflects that this forgiveness is there to be had and he needed it.

And because God was gracious he was ready to give it. Does that mean that he is blasé about this forgiveness? No on the contrary there is a sense of all there is forgiveness therefore you are feared. The fear of God is sensible as he reflects on God's grace so there is this sensible this reverence that the Lord of heaven and earth should be ready to hear his cry from the depths he marvels and he wonders and he worships.

Have you ever reflected upon the grace of God in your life? Have you meditated on the wonder of forgiveness?

That an all holy God should love you in Christ and should be ready to forgive you utterly and completely?

[22 : 42] Does this cause you to be happy? yes it does I'm sure but does it conjure up this sense of awe and worship that God should love sinners like ourselves?

Oh that the spirit of God would work in our lives that we might desire this God more and that we might reflect more and more upon his grace and the wonder of his forgiveness but thirdly there's the waiting verses 5 and 6 I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in his word I put my hope my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning more than watchmen wait for the morning he's waiting in hope verse 5 I wait for the Lord my soul waits and in his word I put my hope you see the progress he's making he's going forward he's no longer in the depths because he sees something of the grace and the forgiveness of God now he's waiting upon the

Lord but this is not an idle waiting he's not twiddling his thumbs waiting for something that might or might not happen he's waiting in confidence he's waiting in faith and you notice how his whole soul is involved in this waiting I wait he says my soul waits and that's repeated in verse 6 my soul waits if you like he's waiting with the whole of his being he's waiting with the involvement of his whole heart for God to come to him to intervene in his life and in his personal experience and how can he do this with such confidence how can he wait in hope well the latter part of verse 5 tells us in his word I put my hope in other words he's looking at scripture he would have had the law available for him and he would have read the law and I would suggest to you that he's looking at some verses that are found in Deuteronomy 30 they're not just found there but they're found elsewhere in the law they're those verses that speak to us of the fact that God is ready to forgive his people when they fail remember God said that if you come into the land and you walk with me then I will bless you with an abundance I will be with you I will watch over you but if you fail then curses will come upon you now what's your hope then well there is no hope except the

Lord continues to be gracious he goes on to say when you are driven away into a far country when things get difficult when you have turned away from me if you turn back to me with all your heart and if you seek to follow my ways and walk as I would have you walk then I will bless you again so what's the psalmist doing he's waiting in hope because of God's word gives him hope and God's word gives each of us hope as well we have much more than the psalmist remember those words in 1 John if we sin if we fail well if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness if the devil whispers into your ear you're a

[27 : 25] Christian you failed and you failed miserably don't wash over your sin but come to him realizing the seriousness of your sin but know also that there is forgiveness with him his word tells us and the blood of Christ will never lose its power till all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more in his word we may put our hope because his word is true so he's waiting he's waiting in hope and he's waiting in anticipation verse six he uses the illustration of a watchman can you imagine an old watchman in the psalmist day he's tired he's weary yet he has to keep alert he has to keep a lookout for the enemy may come at any time what's he looking forward to well he's looking forward to his breakfast he's looking forward to the warmth of his barracks he's looking forward to a bit of shut eye he wants his rest so you can see him waiting with anticipation for the morning for the dawn of a new day perhaps you know what it's like to be like that washman some of you I know will have sat by the side of a bed of someone you love who is near death and the night goes by and you hear the breathing and it seems to be getting weaker what you're doing you're longing for the morning time can't go by quick enough it's a difficult time well the psalmist would understand the feelings of somebody who's been at that particular position but then the psalmist

takes us up to a new level my soul longs waits for the lord more than watchman for the morning and then in case you haven't heard him correctly he says

I know what I'm saying I know the watchman waits for the morning and longs for the morning and anticipates the morning I am longing even more than that my soul waits for the lord more than watchmen wait for the morning repeating himself emphasizing that he's waiting for the lord to intervene on his behalf we think of those old testament saints how they were waiting and longing for the messiah to come I think of old simeon as he was waiting for the messiah he saw israel in their condition in their helplessness and in their hopelessness but he was waiting in hope he was waiting with anticipation he was longing because the lord had told him that he would not see death before he had seen the lord's christ but then the morning came now let your servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen your salvation way back in the old testament isaiah was also waiting for the lord and this is what he says in isaiah 40 and verse 31 those who hope or those who wait in the lord will renew their strength they will soar on wings like eagles they will run and not be weary they will walk and not be faint a friend of mine was preaching on this particular verse and he was thinking of the depths of which we can sink and when we are in the depths we cry out to god and we meditate upon his grace and we wait upon him and as we wait upon him and trust in him and the wonder of his forgiveness we mount up with wings as eagles and what's a mountain to an eagle it's nothing is it and the lord lifts us up in his grace and in his goodness so there's the desiring of the psalmist there's the reflecting of the psalmist there's the waiting of the psalmist and finally there's the exhorting of the psalmist in verses 7 and 8 oh

Israel put your hope in the lord for with the lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption he himself will redeem Israel from all their sins first first of all in this exhortation it's a call to Israel and you notice how the emphasis changes here he's been saying through the psalm I cry my voice I wait my soul he's concentrating on himself and his personal needs and desires and it's understandable because he has been in the depths as he's poured out his soul he's conscious of the lord's help and now he wants others to know that the lord is good that he has put his hope in the lord and he's not disappointed and he calls upon them to do the same oh

Israel he says put your hope in the lord and as I bring this message to a close I say to the folks of Cargillide put your hope in the lord and I can do that as for the same reason that the psalmist did it you notice that his exhortation is based on the very character of god why can they put their trust in the lord why can they put their hope in the lord well because of his unfailing love they knew their history did Israel they knew the story of Abraham being brought out of Ur of the Chaldees they know how god had watched over

Abraham they know how god had watched over them as they found themselves in Egypt how he had watched over them and sent Joseph ahead that they might have something to eat god had been with them god had loved them and even though they had failed him again and again he had not failed them read through the book of judges they sinned and they failed but god had shown his unfailing love by raising up a judge god had been faithful even when they had failed to be faithful themselves his love had been constant put your hope in the lord for with the lord is unfailing love but it wasn't just an unfailing love was it it was a redeeming love they had the sacrifices they knew about the passover where god had delivered them under blood from captivity in

[36 : 03] Egypt and all of this sacrificial system pointed to god as being a redeemer god but to the eye of faith that was looking forward to the coming of another redeemer the lord jesus christ one who was born of a virgin born to redeem those who were under the law so put your hope in this god this god of unfailing love this redeeming this redeemer god and he can exhort them with confidence he himself will redeem israel from all their sins it will happen he's looked at his own sins and he knows that god has come to him and god has redeemed him that god has blessed him and perhaps he's looking forward as well to the coming of one who would give his life a ransom for many the one of whom the apostle paul wrote in ephesians chapter 5 who loved the church and gave himself for her the lord will redeem his people and you and i who so often sin and fail against him the day will come and have every confidence in saying it because the word says it when we will be presented thoughtless without spot without blemish absolutely perfect it will happen he himself will redeem his spiritual

Israel from all their sins so where are we today in that spiritual barometer perhaps we're in the depths will cry out to god desire him above everything else reflect upon the wonders of his grace wait upon him and there is a sense in what i want to say is wait no longer look to christ for with him

is full redemption just over ten years ago i had the opportunity of going up to the north of norway it was in the month of june and some of you know that that's the land of the midnight sun and we were coming back we were coming from the airport as we just arrived there and it was a bit of a dull evening we couldn't see the midnight sun though it was about eleven o'clock at night it was quite overcast and rosemary asked our host where's the best place to see the midnight sun he gave me some wise gave her some wise words he said i think the best place to see the midnight sun he says is to pull the curtains you see where we were staying face out into the sun so at midnight we pulled the curtains and the sun shined on upon us at midnight in the depths my friends pull the curtains of this psalm and let the sunshine of god's love shine upon you all amen let's pray father sometimes we do indeed find ourselves in the depths not just because of sin but for a number of different reasons oh lord we pray that you will grant us all the grace that we need to pull aside the curtains of unbelief and to see you in all your glorious grace to see you in the person of our saviour the lord jesus christ and know that his blood has not only cleansed us from past sin but also of present sin and future sin and help us to know beyond a shadow of doubt that the day will come when we will be presented faultless thank you heavenly father for loving us in christ amen and