

Hope from the Depths

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 July 2022

Preacher: Jonathan Watson

- [0 : 00] Well, I want to turn your attention this evening to the psalm that we read together a few moments ago.
- Psalm 130, this wonderful psalm in which we see the psalmist being rescued from the depths of sin and sorrow and being taken up to the heights of comforting assurance in the steadfast love and redeeming grace of the Lord.
- Whether we realize it or not, we are all by nature in the depths of sin and sorrow. It's true that many don't realize their true condition.
- Why is that? The reason is that sin has left them in what we might call a comatose condition. Remember a few weeks ago there was a story in the news about an American swimmer on one of the swimming teams?
- Was it the synchronized swimming team? And she fainted in the routine. And she began to sink to the bottom of the pool, all unaware of what was happening to her and the danger she was in.
- [1 : 30] Her coach, I believe, saw the danger and dived into the pool and rescued her. But what an illustration that is of so many in the world today.
- They are in danger. They're sinking deep in sin. And yet they are unaware of it. But the psalmist here in Psalm 130 has been made aware of his danger.
- He knows he is in the depths. The Holy Spirit has begun a work in his mind and heart. His eyes have been opened to see his true condition, to be aware of reality.
- He is aware that he is sinking and that he can do nothing to save himself. Nothing to save himself from the dangerous predicament that he's in.
- And so the first thing we observe in the psalm is a cry out of the depths. Verses 1 and 2, he says, Notice to whom he calls.
- [2 : 49] He calls to God. The Lord. The covenant God of Israel.
- And it is to him alone that he directs his cry for mercy. For the psalmist realizes that he cannot help himself.
- He cannot rescue himself. His trouble is too deep for him to extricate himself from. He doesn't have the power. He doesn't have the wisdom.
- He doesn't have the ability to change his predicament. But neither does he turn to anyone else. Or to anything else in the world. Nothing in the world can save him.
- There is no other source of deliverance or salvation. There is no philosophy. There is no set of steps to be taken.
- [3 : 49] There is no method. There is no other religion. There is no other gods that can give him what he needs.
- He is sinking. He is sinking fast. He is already in the depths. And only the living and true God can deliver him and save him.

And so what does he do? He looks away from himself. And he looks away from every other source of offered or pretended help.

And he looks to God alone. And he says to this God, to the Lord, the covenant God of Israel, Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord.

All he can do is cry. All he can do is lift up his voice. All he can do is plead for mercy.

[4 : 58] And yet this is all that he needs to do. For though he is at a very low ebb, a very low condition, He is nevertheless confident of this one thing.

That if he cries out to this God, That this God will be attentive to the voice of his pleas for mercy.

My dear friends, is this not written for our instruction And comfort and encouragement and imitation?

I wonder, is there anyone here in our service this evening? And you are in the depths.

You're in the depths of sin And the misery that so quickly follows hot on the heels of sin. The truth be told, you have gone far from the Lord.

[6 : 04] And you're in a state like the psalmist was in, In which you know that you're sinking fast Under the weight and burden of your sin.

This psalm is telling us What we used to hear so frequently when we were younger. There's a way back to God From the dark paths of sin.

I want you to say with the psalmist What he says here in the opening verses of Psalm 130. Say it with the sincerity of a sinner who knows their need.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive To the voice of my pleas for mercy.

Or say again What he says in Psalm 69 verses 1 and 2. Save me, O God. For the waters are come in unto my soul.

[7 : 14] I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters Where the floods overflow me. These cries for mercy and salvation are found throughout the psalms.

This is the psalmist's cry and plea. But is it yours? Is this something that you have said to the Lord?

Will you say, Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Will you say to the Lord, Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my cry, my cry, my pleas for mercy. A cry from the depths is the first thing we see then in this psalm.

The second thing we notice in the next two verses is a confession of sin. For the psalmist says in verses 3 and 4, If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

[8 : 27] But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. If we were in any doubt about the nature or the cause of the psalmist's distress and trouble in verses 3 and 4, convince us, show us just what that trouble was.

It wasn't an outward physical trouble. It was a spiritual inward trouble. What he's concerned about above all is sin and guilt.

It was his sin and guilt that he did the psalmist. And it was the thought that the Lord sees his sin, that the Lord knows his guilt.

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

The word mark here is used to speak of a record of iniquities being kept.

[9 : 49] The thought in the psalmist's mind is that the Lord is someone who sees all, who notes all, who records all.

Nothing escapes his attention. Think of a guard stationed on a watchtower of a prison camp.

The gate and the perimeter fence of the camp. Think of a sentinel on a wall of a city, whose job it is to take careful note of everyone who comes in and goes out of the city.

His one job is to supervise the city's main gate. Nothing moves. Nothing crosses through that gate without him seeing it. Nothing comes in without his close inspection.

He sees all. He notes all. He inspects all. Nothing escapes his notice. Now, thinks the psalmist, if the Lord should record all that he observes, and if the Lord should then act in strict justice with regard to all that is in his record book, then the thought strikes him.

[11 : 25] Who could stand before this God at the great day of judgment. Who could successfully defend himself before the judge of all.

The psalmist realizes no one could stand before God when those books that record every single thought, every single word that has been spoken, every single deed that has been done in the history of every individual in this world.

No one could stand before God when those books are opened and when the evidence is read and then plead before God, not guilty, your honor.

Romans 3, 10 to 12 says, none is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God.

All have turned aside. Together they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. And a few verses later, as the apostle concludes his opening argument in that great letter to the Romans, he says, now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

[13 : 00] And the idea there is that when the law is read and understood, when it is applied to each and every individual, it shows us our sin.

It shows us our guilt. And our mouths are stopped in the sense that we have nothing to say. We cannot argue that we are not guilty.

We cannot argue, but these were the mitigating circumstances. And so the whole world before God's judgment throne is held to account and found to be guilty before this God.

Psalms 130. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? And you know that that is true.

You know in those quiet moments, maybe the moments when you put your head on the pillow at night, before sleep comes, the thought often haunts you.

[14 : 19] If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, I couldn't stand before you. For I am guilty.

And I know it. As sure as you have seen it. And heard it. And recorded it.

And read it back to me. The mouth will be stopped. We will be speechless.

We will have nothing to plead. For we know that we are guilty and worthy of condemnation, just as this psalm writer knew when he wrote these words by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

And so here, my friends, we see the psalmist confessing his sin and his sinful state before God. He is acknowledging that at the root of all his troubles and woes is sin and rebellion against God.

[15 : 29] Because that's what sin is. It is rebellion against God. It is saying to God, as the Jews said to Pilate, when Jesus was about to be crucified, we will not have this man to lean over us.

We will not have this God to lean over us. We will do what we want to do with our lives. We will not acknowledge his law or live under his commands.

The psalmist confesses, in effect, that he is worthy of the suffering he is going through and is worthy of the condemnation that his sins deserve.

But, is there no hope for him? The answer to that question is, yes, there is hope.

Because, look at verse 4. In verse 4, we see what has led him, what has brought him to the confession and to the acknowledgement of his sins.

[16 : 42] But with you, there is forgiveness. Therefore, you are feared that you may be feared. My friends, this statement in verse 4 is the great and glorious truth of Scripture.

With God, there is forgiveness. That is great news. That is glorious news. That is good news.

That is gospel. Gospel. The good news concerning God in Christ. There is forgiveness.

Sin is a reality, but, there is forgiveness. My friends, this is the reason why we come to church, is it not? On the Lord's Day.

This is why we worship God. This is why we sing his praises. This is why we pray to him. This is why we learn his ways from his word. Because with God, there is forgiveness for sinners such as we.

[17 : 52] And my friends, this is the truth that will lead men and women to approach God, to come near to him, to dare to come near to him, to seek salvation from his hand.

As William Tyndale, the first translator of the New Testament into English, said, God is friendly minded towards sinners.

You can come to him because with him there is forgiveness. With God there is forgiveness.

One commentator says that forgiveness is one of his close and ever-present companions along with steadfast love and redemption in all its sufficient fullness.

Look at verse 4 of the psalm. But with you there is forgiveness. Then look at verse 7. For with the Lord there is steadfast love.

[19 : 06] And again, verse 7. And with him is plentiful redemption. redemption. Three close and ever-present companions with the Lord.

Where the Lord is there is forgiveness. Where the Lord is there is steadfast love.

Where the Lord is there is plentiful redemption. motivation. My friends, what greater motivation can I give you to come to God?

You know that you're a sinner. You're being self-deceived if you pretend otherwise.

I shouldn't have to tell you that. You know that. Your conscience tells you that on a daily basis. But here is good news and this is why God has raised up preachers.

[20 : 17] They are to tell the good news that with God there is forgiveness. That with God there is steadfast or covenant love.

Faithfulness to his word of promise. That with the Lord there is redemption sufficient for the needs of each and every single one of us here this evening.

So I ask you my friends have you turned to God to this God? Now one reason why many don't turn to God or haven't turned to God is because when they think of God they think only of God's justice.

and that terrifies them and that makes them hate God and want to run away from God and to hide from God just as Adam and Eve did when in the garden after they had sinned and knew that they had sinned when their eyes were opened that they knew their nakedness as it were.

What did they do when they heard the footsteps of their friend and maker come to hold evening communion and fellowship with them in the garden?

[21 : 38] What did they do when they heard his steps in the garden? They ran and hid because they were afraid. That's one of the reasons why many do not or have not turned to God.

They think of God and when they think of God they think of his justice. of the punishment of sin which must take place and they're terrified and they run away in the opposite direction and they hide from him.

That hiding can take many forms. They drown out his voice. They stop coming to church. They don't want to hear the gospel. They fill their lives with business or with pleasure.

Why is this? When in the gospel forgiveness is offered, steadfast love is displayed, a plentiful redemption redemption.

It's provided. Oh my friends, see what the word of God says here about this God. With you there is forgiveness, steadfast love, plentiful redemption.

[23 : 17] my friends, come to him receive. If you haven't done so before, even if you have done before, come to him again if you're distanced from him.

find what we have found by experience, the forgiveness of sin, the removal of our guilt, and the joy of a restored, reconciled relationship with God.

And then the next section of the psalm shows us a confident longing. The confident longing that the psalmist has sheds so much light upon the previous statement that he makes with regard to forgiveness being found with the Lord.

He says, that you may be feared, but with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared, and yet the next sentence he says, I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.

My soul waits for the Lord more than watchman for the morning, more than watchman for the morning. The previous verse spoke about God being feared when the sinner is forgiven.

[24 : 42] This fear of the Lord, mentioned so often as you know in the Old Testament scriptures, is not to be thought of as a slavish fear, but as a reverential fear that is born out of love for God.

And that's why C.H. Spurgeon, in his treasury of David, translates the end of verse 4 as that you may be loved and worshipped and served.

fear. So if you want to amplify what the word fear means in that context, at the end of verse 4, it is men and women and young people are forgiven that they might love and worship and serve the God of grace.

And in verses 5 and 6 we see that the psalmist longs for the restoration of his communion, of his fellowship with God.

A communion and fellowship that has been marred and broken and lost by his sin. Notice he's not waiting here for his sorrows to end, nor is he waiting here for his sins to be forgiven.

[26 : 04] What is it that he is waiting for? What is it that he is longing for? More than the watchman waiting long for the morning to come. What is it? He tells us that it is for the Lord himself that his soul waits for.

Now, if the fear of the Lord was a slavish fear, then this would make no sense. He wouldn't be longing to have fellowship with a God that he feared in that sense.

But he waits, and he is content to wait for the Lord to come afresh to him. And he compares himself to the watchman of the night who stand guard over the city until the day breaks and the shadows flee away.

At the first sign of dawn, their long and tedious watch will end. And so they long for the sun to rise again and for the day to dawn.

But the psalmist longs for God to arise. The psalmist longs for God to lift up his countenance upon him even more. His longing is more intense and expectant and sure than that of the watchman who wait for the morning.

[27 : 48] And I would say that he's just as more, just if not more confident than the watchman who know that morning always follows night.

And those watchmen have no doubt whatsoever in their mind that at the end of their tedious long night watch the morning will dawn, the day will break. And they've got that confidence, they've got that sense of certainty that this will happen.

But you notice the wording here, the psalmist is even more confident in his longing than those watchmen are for the breaking of the day, for the sun to rise.

God will come to him and he's more certain of it than that the sun will rise tomorrow. It is an expectant, confident longing.

And that tells us something, as I said before, about the nature of the relationship that God restores when he forgives the sins of his people. There is a love created in the soul.

[29 : 12] It is the first of the ninefold fruit of the spirit. Love, joy, peace. He longs for what he loves.

And the Spurgeon says he longs, he longs to love him, to worship him, to serve him.

Think of the words of the Lord Jesus to that church in Laodicea that had grown cold upon and look warm in its affections to the Saviour.

And he paints the picture of him standing outside the church, knocking on the door. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him.

And then here's the image, here's the picture. I will sup with him and he with me. Could there be a more intimate form of fellowship than sitting down at table, facing the Lord Jesus Christ and sharing a meal together.

[30 : 40] that's a picture of the fellowship, the nature of the fellowship between the Lord and his forgiven, cleansed, reconciled, restored child.

This is what the psalmist longs for. But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. I wait. I wait.

I long for the Lord to come and for us to sit down at table together and eat together and have fellowship together and have communion one with the other.

and then we come to the final two verses of the psalm, verses 7 and 8.

If the opening two verses of the psalm looked upward out of the depths, if the second couplet looked inward into the heart with its sinfulness and guilt, if the third couplet looked forward to that time when the Lord would surely come and restore fellowship and communion with the psalmist, then the last couplet looks outward and around about himself because having been forgiven, with the prospect of this sweet and happy fellowship being restored, he becomes an evangelist, a preacher of the good news to others.

[32 : 52] I think there's a principle there before we go on, I think there's a principle there that the church largely today has forgotten. You cannot make evangelists by putting them through a course.

It's not a case of painting by numbers. If you want people to become good evangelists, they have to know the Lord and experience afresh what it means to be forgiven, to know the blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin, to know this intimate fellowship and communion with the Lord himself, then there's no stopping them.

my heart is full of Christ and longs its glorious matter to declare. You can't hold them back, you can't hold them down. Their love for the Lord makes them infectious but in a good way.

love. It's like Psalm 51 which David wrote when the Lord brought him to repentance over his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite.

Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation. what comes next? Then will I teach transgressors your ways and then sinners will be converted unto you.

[34 : 25] He needed to know the grace of God in his heart and life and soul. And when that would come to him, it would so transform him that the next logical step is to go out and teach transgressors his ways that sinners might be converted to him.

Just as David the transgressor was taught the Lord's ways and just as David the sinner was converted unto the Lord. Well here the psalmist now looks out and around and about him and he becomes something of an evangelist with good news to tell to others.

O Israel, he's addressing the whole nation. Hope in the Lord, trust in the Lord, put your trust in Jehovah.

For with the Lord there is steadfast love. That's the first reason. And with him there is plentiful redemption.

Plenteous redemption sounds better I think than plentiful redemption. redemption. It's a redemption that is just perfect for every need that a sinner has.

[35 : 47] And this wonderful prophetic statement at the end of the psalm. And he will redeem Israel from all, not some, but from all his iniquities.

Oh my friends, put your hope in the Lord, he says. because he is a God of covenant faithfulness. He will keep his promises.

One of the promises he made in the covenant to our forefather Abraham was that in his seed, and you know what Paul makes of that statement in the letter to the Galatians, in his seed, not seeds, but in his seed, Jesus Christ the Messiah.

every family of the earth would be blessed. The blessing of Abraham would come upon the whole world.

And with him is plentiful redemption. When we think of the redeeming love of God, we have a much fuller and greater picture than any of the prophets of the Old Testament knew.

[36 : 57] We're looking back, they looked forward to the coming of the Christ. We look back, we see. We see also the expositions of the life and death and resurrection of Christ that we find in the New Testament epistles.

But notice, look, here is a promise. And though the basis of the redemption that was promised a way back in the days of the psalmist was less well known to them because not so clearly revealed to them as it is to us, yet the fact the fact of the redemption and the fact of the forgiveness to be experienced was not in any doubt whatsoever.

How God would bring this about, they were not sure because it wasn't revealed to them as it is to us. But they didn't concern themselves with things too high for them.

They were just glad to know God would deal with it in his own way and in his own time. But the fact is that there is forgiveness, that there is steadfast love, that there is a plentiful redemption for a sinner such as I am.

And so he tells Israel, put your hope in the Lord, put your trust in this promising and promise keeping God.

[38 : 54] We know so well, don't we, how God brought about this redemption. And it's perfectly summed up in one verse in Paul's great exposition to the Roman Christians, Romans chapter 3 and verse 24.

Having said that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, he says, and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

That's where it's to be found, in Christ Jesus. If you have Jesus Christ, you have everything. You have this redemption.

redemption, redemption that forgives you all your sins and in which God accounts you as righteous in his sight, not for anything that you have done, but he puts to your account the righteousness of Christ and it comes to you freely as a gift.

the word freely there is the same word in the original that was used when Jesus spoke about the Jews hating him without a cause.

[40 : 23] Without a cause. It's the same word, freely, without a cause. God forgives my sins and justifies me, treats me as righteous in his sight.

without a cause needing to be found in me. Freedom. Freedom. As a gift of his grace.

And it all comes to us because of what God has done in the person and work of Jesus Christ who died on the cross and on the third day after was raised from the dead.

That is the stamp of approval. That is the divine certification that what Jesus did for sinners is accepted by God.

He was handed over for all offenses. He was raised again for our justification. And so this psalmist cries from the depths.

[41 : 37] That is where he starts. He confesses his sins. He expresses this confident longing. And the psalm finishes with this comforting word of assurance.

Do you know have you cried from the depths? Have you confessed your sins? Do you now have this confident longing for God to meet with you and to have fellowship with you?

And do you have this assurance that brings so much comfort God? That God not will but God has redeemed Israel from all his iniquities.

It's a wonderful psalm. It's one of Martin Luther's favorites. it's a great and I trust that for someone here this evening it will become a favorite psalm of yours as well because it is the psalm that the Lord used to bring you back to himself.

Let us pray. Our heavenly father we give you thanks for your word and for the psalms of David we thank you that they show us our need and they show us your provision for our need.

[43 : 28] Help us to turn to you to cry and call upon your name to plead for mercy confessing our sins may we know what it means to be reconciled to you and fill us with that comforting assurance that comes from trusting in the Redeemer you have provided for us even the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.