

Psalm of Individual Lament

Psalm 130: “Tell Them God Forgave You”

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 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.

INTRODUCING THE PSALM

- + This was Martin Luther’s favorite psalm. He wrote a hymn based on it, “Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee.” He called it one of the Pauline psalms (along with 32, 51, and 143), because these psalms show the truths of sin and grace, the heart of Paul’s and Luther’s theology.
- + This is one of the “Songs of Ascent” (Psalms 120-134), used by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, pilgrims encouraging each other, anticipating upcoming worship services at the temple when they will corporately confess their sins and receive absolution, assurance that God truly and fully forgave their sins.
- + The climax of the psalm is in the last line: “(God) Himself will redeem Israel from **all** their sins” (v 8). The evil one tries to convince us that God may forgive *some* of our sins, but not *all* of them. (“Remember that sin I committed in 1994? Surely God can’t forgive that one; it’s too horrible.”) But partial forgiveness is no forgiveness.

The Psalm in Detail

- + Vs. 1: We cry out to God from the depths (word also used for the deepest ocean floor). This is not a problem of illness, homesickness, persecution, or political terror, but of *guilt* over sin. When we think of our sins, the devil tries the ploy of “divide and conquer.” Other passages which picture this frantic dilemma: Psalm 69:2 and Psalm 30:1. Jeremiah was literally thrown into a pit as imprisonment. He suffered greatly: Lamentations 3:53-54. But watch out for self-pity, which focuses on us, not God.

If Satan can isolate us as we agonize over certain sins, he will be able to cut us off from our Source of help, God and His forgiveness which heals and renews us...and other believers. Luther wrote a treatise “The Mutual Conversation and Consolation of the Saints.” We need our fellow redeemed people to keep us objective, balanced, and hopeful. That’s exactly what is expressed towards the end of this psalm.

- + Vs. 2 “Let your ears be attentive to my cry from mercy.” See Psalm 34:15-16, in which God is described as shutting His eyes and ears, and turning His face against those who do evil, while opening His eyes & ears, and turning His face *toward* the righteous. 34:17 says that when the righteous cry out, the LORD hears and delivers them from *all* their troubles.
- + Vss 3-4. Does God keep a record of our sins? Others do sometimes, for possible future use as “negotiating chips” against us. God does not. This truth is at the heart of His forgiving us: 2 Cor. 5:18ff. God doesn’t count them against us. But that doesn’t mean it’s easy for us humans to accept that we’re forgiven. Also God gives us the privilege of being His agents, “making His appeal through us.”

Meditate on the vast benefits of God forgiving you: F.B. Meyer wrote, “Forgiveness at any moment for the sins of a lifetime; repeated forgiveness for the sins of the hour; forgiveness instantaneously upon confession. And when God once speaks forgiveness, there is irrevocable forgiveness with God.” See Ex.34:6-7.

The result: We fear God with a different kind of fear, full of trust and love. Meyer: “Because God forgave us, we have a dread of causing Him pain. The element of fear comes back into our nature, refined and purified thru the fires of love.”

- + Vss 6-8. We now live in a state of anticipation and sure hope as we look to the future. We’re like watchmen totally certain that the morning is coming. This assurance is one of the reasons the Bible was written, 1 John 5:13. C.S. Lewis wrote of this calm hope which allows us to make good plans for the future, while living one day at a time: “The greatest thing is to be found at one’s post as a child of God, living each day as though it were our last, but planning as though our world might last a hundred years.”
- + Our hope is based not on our virtue or faithfulness, but on God’s unfailing love. The Hebrew word *chesed* means God thinks of us as His friends. John 15:5-16.
- + This hope-based-on-God's-unfailing-love helps us not be afraid that someone might get away with something, might sin and not have to pay punishment. Others need to hear our story of God faithfully forgiving us, so they may hope in God, too.

LIVING PSALM 130

- 1. Don’t let the devil paint you into a corner of isolation with your sin. Confess it to God who is more than ready to forgive you.**
- 2. Assured God forgives you all your sin, revere Him, love Him and trust Him with your life. Enjoy your relationship with Him. Live with a sense of anticipation about your future under God.**
- 3. Tell others of your joy in being forgiven by God. Tell them God is anxious for them to have that same joy.**