

Hear My Voice!

Psalm 130

INTRODUCTION

- A. In the aftermath of the Virginia Tech massacre, a prayer service was held to provide some comfort to that grief-stricken community.
 - 1. The man leading that service stood & prayed the first two verses of this Psalm: “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.”
 - 2. It’s not surprising that the minister turned to this text, for this passage—through the ages—has provided the voice of so many experiencing deep, deep grief.
 - 3. Who among us hasn’t experienced “the depths”? Who among us hasn’t cried to the LORD out of the depths?
- B. While the opening words of this Psalm can certainly be applied to various grief, the context isn’t grief in general.
 - 1. This Psalm, like many that plead to God for help, wasn’t written during a time of personal calamity & catastrophe.
 - 2. This Psalm comes from a time of personal sin.
 - a. Notice verses 3 & 4: “If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.”
 - b. The Psalmist has sinned & he pleads with the LORD for the forgiveness of his sins.
 - 1) Tonight, we wish to study this Psalm in order that we, too, might pray this prayer of forgiveness.
 - 2) As we explore this Psalm, we’ll notice: A CRY, A CONFESSION, A CERTAINTY, & A COUNSEL.

A CRY, vv 1-2

- A. “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!”
- B. The psalmist cries to the LORD “out of the depths.”
 - 1. Throughout the Old Testament, “the depths” stands for great distress.
 - a. “Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me” (Ps 69:1-2).
 - b. In the prayer of Jonah, the disobedient prophet cries out, “You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas, and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your billows passed over me” (Jon 2:3).
 - 2. Thus, the psalmist finds himself in deep distress because of his sin.
 - a. The Psalm doesn’t tell us whether or not “the depths” refers to guilt or if the psalmist is experiencing some punishment from God.
 - b. We are all aware of the guilt sin brings.
 - 1) The letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians “grieved [them] into repenting” (2 Cor 7:9).
 - 2) The Prodigal Son grieved over his sin & determined to go to his father and confess his sins.
 - 3) After Peter denied knowing Jesus, “he went out and wept bitterly” (Mt 26:75).
 - 4) Who among us hasn’t experienced the guilt that sin brings?

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- a) Who among us hasn't wallowed in the depths of guilt? Who hasn't had his heart broken because he saw how he hurt someone he loves?
 - b) Maybe tonight you yourself are experiencing "the depths" of guilt.
 - c. We are all aware that sin also brings divine punishment.
 - 1) At the time this Psalm was written, God would punish people for sin directly.
 - a) Because David sinned with Bathsheba, God promised him that the sword would never depart from his house, that one of his sons would lie with his wives in the sight of all Israel, & that the child conceived from the adultery would die (2 Sm 12:10-14).
 - i. Every single promise God made through Nathan came to pass.
 - ii. Perhaps, it was at that time that David penned Psalm 32: "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the head of summer" (vv 3-4).
 - b) So many suffered immediately for their sins: fire consumed Nadab & Abihu when they offered profane fire on the altar, the Lord struck Uzziah dead when he reached out to steady the ark, etc.
 - 2) While there can be no doubt but that great punishment awaits the unrepentant in the next life, I'm convinced that God punishes sin in this life, too.
 - a) David prayed that God would not remove the Holy Spirit from him (Ps 51:11). If God removes the Holy Spirit from us, we no longer belong to Christ (Rm 8:9).
 - b) If we are unrepentant, our prayers will not have "great power" (Js 5:16).
- C. Because of his sin, the psalmist asks God to hear his voice. Do you, because of your sin, need to ask God to hear your voice this very night?

CONFESSION, vv 3-4

- A. "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."
- B. Praise God that he keeps no record of iniquities! Otherwise, we could not stand before him.
 - 1. The Hebrew word, as it is used here, means "to store up."
 - a. This is the term, for example, that's used as Joseph tells Pharaoh to store up grain for seven years: "Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh for food in the cities, and let them keep it" (Gen 41:35).
 - b. The idea in this verse is of God's storing up all past sins, so that he can use them against the righteous.
 - 2. If God were to do such, not even the righteous could stand before him.
 - a. "Stand" could mean a couple of things.
 - 1) "Stand" could refer to passing through judgment.
 - a) "The wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (Ps 1:5).
 - b) If "stand" means to face the judgment, not even the righteous could face judgment if God kept a record of sins.
 - 2) "Stand" can also mean to be in God's presence.
 - a) "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?" (Ps 24:3).
 - b) If stand has that connotation here, not even the righteous could draw near to God in worship if God kept a record of sins.
 - b. I tend to think that those two nuances of "stand" are quite tightly linked.
 - 1) The context of Psalm 24 is the worship of God.

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- 2) However, those who pass through judgment & land on the other side shall be in the full presence of God.
- C. God, however, keeps no record of wrongs, for with him there is forgiveness.
 1. There is where the psalmist can put his hope!
 2. God is so full of forgiveness.
 - a. God “will tread our iniquities under foot. [He] will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic 7:19).
 - b. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9).
 3. How wonderful it is to know that “with [God] there is forgiveness”!
 - a. No matter what we’ve done, God stands ready & willing to forgive.
 - b. Has he forgiven you of your sins?

CERTAINTY, vv 5-6

- A. “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.”
- B. The psalmist’s soul waits for the LORD & hopes in his word.
 1. The term “wait” means far more than sitting around waiting on someone or something.
 - a. The Hebrew term means “patient expectation.”
 - 1) Specifically, the term often expressed a confident expectation of God’s acting for the salvation of his people.
 - 2) That is the way the term is used in Gn 49:18: “I wait for your salvation, O LORD.”
 - b. Thus, the psalmist is confidently expecting God to forgive his sins. What could be the basis of that confident expectation?
 2. The psalmist says: “In his word I hope.”
 - a. “His word” here likely refers to the covenant promises of God. God had promised to forgive the sins of his remnant; therefore, the psalmist knew that God would fulfill his promises.
 - b. We, likewise, know that God will forgive us our sins, for he has promised to do so.
 - 1) God has a new covenant promise to forgive our sins: “‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,’ then he adds, ‘I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more’” (Heb 10:16-17).
 - 2) Notice again 1 Jn 1:9.
 - a) “If we confess our sins, he is ***faithful*** and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
 - b) God “is faithful . . . to forgive us our sins” because he has promised to do so.
 - c) Therefore, “he is . . . just to forgive us our sins,” for in keeping his promises, God is doing the just—i.e., the right—thing.
- C. Thus, the psalmist’s soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning.
 1. The poetry here is absolutely stunning & beautiful.
 - a. The psalmist has just repeated the idea of confident expectation four times: three with the word “wait” & once with the word “hope.”
 - b. Now, he repeats “more than watchmen for the morning” twice.
 - c. The effect is to bring the Psalm to a stair-like crescendo where the reader himself is caught up in the confident expectation that God will soon act for the psalmist’s forgiveness.
 2. The watchmen, of course, were those who guarded the city from sudden attacks while the population slept peacefully.

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- a. As the watchmen joyfully anticipate the morning, so the psalmist is joyfully anticipating the forgiveness of God.
- b. Of course, the watchmen knew without any doubt that the morning would come.
 - 1) With us, there is always that possibility that the sun will not come up in the morning, for the Son of God will have returned to destroy this universe.
 - a) But, when this Psalm was written, that wasn't even a possibility, for the Son had not yet come the first time!
 - b) The point is that just as the watchmen knew that the morning was coming, so the psalmist knew that God's forgiveness would come.
 - 2) What a blessed thought! We know—without any doubt—that God waits to forgive us our sins if only we will turn to him! Have you turned to him to have your sins forgiven?

COUNSEL, vv 7-8

- A. "O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."
- B. The psalmist urges his fellow countrymen to do as he does—to hope in the LORD.
- C. The Israelites had every reason to place confident expectation in the LORD, for he has both steadfast love and plentiful redemption.
 1. "Steadfast love" refers to "unfailing love."
 - a. The idea in the term is that God's mercy, his concern for his people, does not stop.
 - b. The Hebrew term was used to refer to the loyalty of kings to their people.
 - 1) The king & the people would enter into a covenant.
 - a) The people were to be loyal to the king, and their loyalty was described by the Hebrew term "steadfast love."
 - b) The king's fulfilling his obligations of the covenant was also loyalty to the covenant & was described by the Hebrew term "steadfast love."
 - 2) Thus, God has "steadfast love" in that he kept the covenant with the children of Abraham.
 - a) In revealing himself to Moses, God promised to be loyal to his people & to forgive their sins: God keeps "steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34:7).
 - b) Therefore, God's steadfast love means that he will forgive the people's iniquity and transgression and sin.
 2. With God is plentiful redemption.
 - a. We typically think of "redemption" in New Testament terms, where Jesus provided his blood to "redeem" us from sin. It is altogether proper that we typically think of "redemption" in such terms, for Jesus has, indeed, redeemed us from sin.
 - b. But, in the Old Testament, the "redemption" generally refers simply to an "exchange."
 - 1) Land that had to be sold to pay a debt could be redeemed by the debtor's nearest relative (Lev 25:25).
 - 2) Slaves could also be redeemed by the slave's nearest relative (Lev 25:47-55).
 - c. However, the term also refers to salvation from terrible circumstances.
 - 1) When Israel blessed Joseph, he said, "The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys" (Gn 48:16).
 - 2) About their escape from Egyptian bondage, the Lord tells the Israelites, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment" (Ex 6:6).

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- d. God would redeem the psalmist from “the depths” by forgiving his sin. God has “plentiful redemption” & he is able, therefore, to forgive the sins of all his people.

CONCLUSION

A. Throughout this Psalm, the author is making an important point in an intriguing way.

1. He keeps referring to God as “Lord.”

- a. In Hebrew, there are two terms that are translated “Lord” in English.

- 1) The first is YHWH, the name by which God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush.

- a) Because the Jews were afraid of taking the name of the Lord in vain, they stopped pronouncing the name & inserted the word “Lord” when they came to the Divine Name.

- b) Most of our English translations continue that practice by translating the Divine Name as “LORD” (with all caps).

- 2) The second is “*Adonai*.”

- a) This is the term that means God is divine, that he is a Master.

- b) Interestingly, the psalmist uses “*Adonai*” throughout this short Psalm.

- b. The meaning is quite obvious: The psalmist could count on YHWH hearing his cry & redeeming him from the depths, because he was his personal “*adonai*.”

2. The psalmist had accepted God as the Lord of his life; therefore, he knew that God would hear & answer.

B. Is God the Lord of your life? Do you know that he will hear & answer you?