

# Psalm 130: The Depths

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Date: 16 August 2020

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening.

We'll begin this time of worship by singing to God's praise from Psalm 130. Psalm 130. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, my voice, Lord, do thou hear.

Unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear. Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be.

We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise. And after we've sung, Angus Alec Morrison will lead us in prayer in Gaelic. Lord, from the depths to thee I cried, My voice, Lord, do thou hear.

Unto my supplications voice give an attentive ear.

[ 1 : 27 ] Lord, who shall stand if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, but yet with thee forgivenesses that feared thou mayest be.

I wait for God. My soul doth wait. My hope is in his word.

More than they that for morning watch, my soul waits for the Lord.

I say more than they that do watch, the morning light to see.

Let Israel open the Lord, for with him mercies be.

[ 2 : 54 ] And plenteous redemption is ever found with him.

And from all his iniquities, he Israel shall redeem.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. ....

[ 4 : 18 ] the Reform good boy glory tiny view girl humane can order the c1 and the theater with just whateo oh here and foreign

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[ 8 : 13 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[ 12 : 23 ] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Psalm 130 being sung when the psalmist calls out to God from the depths. And that's said to have affected Wesley deeply as he listened to that psalm being sung.

Not only did he hear the psalmist call out to God, cry out to God from the depths, but Wesley in his unconverted state, and he was realising that more and more at that time, Wesley joined with the psalmist as one who was in the depths.

And yet later that day, he was taken from the depths to the heights. And this is what he wrote of his conversion. He says, in the evening, this is the 24th of May, 1738, in the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans.

About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation.

[13:50] And an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

So, Psalm 130 was used to take him to the depths where he realised the sin. And then as Romans was opened, he was taken from the depths to the heights as he saw his Saviour, and as he received that salvation and that assurance.

So, this is a psalm that has been used very much in the life of God's people through the ages. It's said to be Calvin's favourite psalm.

It was said to be Luther's favourite psalm. When Luther underwent great temptation, he would get together with his friend, and he would say, come, let's sing Psalm 130, in praise to God and against the devil.

And as he did that, he would know a relief, he would know a sense of being released from that temptation. It's a psalm also that brought great comfort to John Bunyan, the writer of Pilgrim's Progress.

[15:04] And it's a psalm that I pray that God will use in our lives this evening as we study it for a moment or two. Where does it begin?

Well, it begins in the depths. And that's our first point, the depths. Verses 1 and 2. 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. There are some things, there are some places that scare us, that we don't want to go to, we don't want to be in.

Children often don't like the dark. They want the hall light to be on all night long. Grown men don't like the dentist.

We don't like going to the doctor. And one of the fears that was held by many of the Hebrew people in this Old Testament times was the sea.

[16:05] The Hebrews were not people who were seafaring people. They rathered the deserts. And so they feared the sea. They feared the depths of the sea.

And that's the picture the psalm begins with. The psalmist, he's sinking. He's drowning. He's helpless. And so he cries out from the depths to the Lord.

And if we want a fuller expression of this, if we want a higher definition picture of the depths, we could go to Psalm 69 as another place.

The psalmist says in Psalm 69 verse 1, Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. Verse 2, I sink in the miry depths where there is no foothold.

I have come into deep waters. The floods engulf me. Verse 14, Rescue me from the mire. Do not let me sink. Verse 15, Do not let the floodwaters engulf me, or the depths swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

[17:15] So oftentimes, the psalmist found himself in the depths. And often we can find ourselves in the depths.

When we follow Christ, it's not a guarantee that we will live on a higher plane and we will know a life of happiness and prosperity and everything will always go fine.

Sometimes we find ourselves in the depths. We may not be quick to admit it. We may tell everyone around us that we're doing just fine when they ask the question.

And yet, actually, we may feel like we're sinking. So what do we do when we have that experience? What do we do when we find ourselves in the depths and we feel like we're going down?

Well, we do what the psalmist did. We cry out to the Lord for help. Spurgeon says, It's often surprised me when I speak to fishermen and there's no shortage of fishermen around here.

[18:52] It's often surprised me that very few fishermen can swim. I would have thought that a fisherman would be first in line to learn how to swim so that if he ever went overboard, there would be a chance of saving oneself.

But the fishermen that I've spoken to, they're so aware of the power of the sea and they're so aware of their own weakness in terms of the comparison of the power of the sea that they always say that they wouldn't expect if they went over to be able to save themselves.

And that seems to be the psalmist's perspective. He knows he can't save himself. He's in the depths, but he knows that he cannot claw his own way out of the depths.

And so he cries out to the Lord. Another quote from Spurgeon. Spurgeon says that it little matters where we are if we can pray.

But prayer is never more real and acceptable than when it rises out of the worst places. deep places beget deep devotion. Depths of earnestness are stirred by depths of tribulation. [ 20 : 18 ] And there is that earnestness that we sense in this psalm. We see it four times in the first few verses there. The psalmist, he is saying, O Lord, I cry to you, O Lord, O Lord, verse 2, hear my voice.

If you, verse 3, O Lord, kept a record of my sins, O Lord, who could stand? So there is that earnestness, there's that fervency, there's that passion that fills the prayer of the psalmist as he calls out from the depths to the Lord.

So first of all, we begin the psalm and the depths. The second point that we have here is confession. Just as we think about the prayer of the psalmist, it comes from the depths, but as we look at the prayer itself, we hear that it's a prayer of confession.

So point number two is confession. Now we may want to ask the psalmist, what is it that's taken you into the depths?

And if we were to step back through the psalms, as we've been doing for some years now, actually, we could see many different reasons that caused the psalmist or the psalmist to be in a state of depression at times.

[ 21 : 48 ] We quoted from Psalm 69 just a few moments ago, and Psalm 69, the trouble that was bringing the psalmist down was he was wrestling with slander and persecution.

We could go to Psalm 6 and again we find the psalmist in a difficult place and on that occasion he's struggling with illness. Psalm 42, we have a very honest struggle with homesickness.

But on this occasion, the struggle that the psalmist was undergoing, the struggle that was causing him to sink, was a struggle with sin.

And we get a hint of that in verse 2 where the psalmist cries out for mercy, let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

But in verses 3 and 4, the psalmist is very open, he's very honest, he's very transparent about the fact that the reason he's sinking is because of his sin, his sin against God.

[ 23 : 08 ] Verse 3, If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? And the psalmist is saying as he makes that confession, certainly not me.

I can't stand. In fact, I'm sinking. I'm sinking deeper and deeper down into the depths. The weight of my sin is pressing me more and more down.

And so he confesses it. There's echoes of Jonah here as well. Remember, Jonah is called by God to go to Nineveh.

Jonah doesn't want to go to Nineveh. He doesn't like the place, he doesn't like the people, he doesn't like the job that God has given him to do. Jonah doesn't want to go God's way, he wants to go his own way.

And that's sin. It's an expression of sin. We don't want to go God's way, we want to do it our way. So where did that sin take Jonah? Well, it took him into a storm.

[ 24 : 18 ] It took him overboard. It took him into the depths. And from the depths, Jonah, like the psalmist, he also cried, he confessed his sin. So maybe you could go to Jonah just for a moment.

Jonah chapter 2 and we'll read from verses 2 to verse 7. From the depths of the grave, writes Jonah, I called for help and you listened to my cry.

You hurled me into the deep, into the very heart of the seas and the current swirled about me, all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, I have been banished from your sight, yet I will look again towards your holy temple.

The engulfing waters threatened me, the deep surrounding me, seaweed was wrapped around my head. To the roots of the mountains I sank down. The earth beneath barred me in forever.

But you have brought my life up from the pit, O Lord, my God. When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple.

[ 25 : 43 ] So there we have a prayer not dissimilar to the prayer of the psalmist here. It's another prayer from the depths and it's a prayer of confession.

And the application here is straightforward. And the application comes to us in the form of a question. Have you and I confessed our sin?

The psalmist, he confesses his sin. He brings it to the Lord. Have you and I confessed our sin? Note the psalmist in this prayer, he doesn't make excuses.

He doesn't try to justify himself. He doesn't try to plead some kind of defense. He simply confesses his sin. So have you and I done that?

Because we need to. The problem that the psalmist felt that took him to the depths is a problem that all of us share.

[ 26 : 52 ] We've had it pressed in on us in the teaching within Romans. all of us are sinners. None of us are righteous. All fall short of the glory of God.

God. There was a man a few weeks ago who was speaking to the youth fellowship. Sam is his name from 20 schemes.

And Sam was given his testimony. He spoke about his past life when as a young man, he's a big lad, he got involved in a criminal underworld.

He was a debt collector essentially. He made a lot of money. He was a very dangerous man. But one night after he'd been in a nightclub as he was leaving this nightclub, there was a girl who stopped him at the door.

And she said to him, I know who you are. And everybody knew who Sam was. So he looked at her and he said, what do you mean? And she said, we all fall short of the glory of God.

[ 28 : 08 ] We all fall short of the glory of God. Strange kind of a thing to say. And yet that verse from scripture that she passed on at a nightclub door haunted him for the next two years.

And it took him to the depths. It was used by God to show him his sin. And then from the depths, he cried out.

He confessed his sin. And he was saved. And that takes us to our third point here. Salvation. Verse four.

The psalmist writes, but with you there is forgiveness. Luther, I mentioned this was one of his favorite psalms.

And we can see why it was one of his favorite psalms. He described it as a Pauline or a Pauline psalm.

[ 29 : 18 ] And we can understand why he makes that comparison. Paul so often, he takes us to the depths of our sin. And then he takes us from the depths of sin to the heights of salvation.

And he uses that hinge word but. We could think about Romans chapter 3 where Paul in Romans chapter 3 he says to us but there is a righteousness that comes from God that is available to those who are sinners.

We can think about Ephesians chapter 2 there's that dark portrayal of our sin and then the whole of the grace of the gospel rushes in it swings in Paul says but there is there is grace there is grace available to us and that's what the psalmist does here.

He says if you oh Lord kept a record of sins oh Lord who could stand but with you there is forgiveness. just a few words but with these few words there's such light that rushes in there's such hope that floods into this chapter but with you that it's forgiveness.

Maybe there's someone who's watching this evening and you need to hear that for the first time tonight. maybe there's someone who who's been taken to the depths over these past months or even years.

[ 30 : 58 ] Maybe there's someone who feels that they have been drowning under the weight of sin. Well what do you need to hear and believe this evening? You need to hear but with you with God that it's forgiveness.

or maybe there's someone who's watching who needs to hear this all over again tonight. Maybe we've been on the road for many years walking with God but of late we've been slipping.

We've been struggling. We've been falling into sin. Maybe tonight we feel like we're in the depths.

We've fallen into sin again. And the devil is saying to us you've gone too far this time.

There's no way back for you. You've blown it. You've had your chances. You've made a mess of it. Yet again you may as well close your Bible. You may as well get off your knees.

You may as well switch off the service. There's no hope for you. That's what the devil says. Well what does God say? Well he says with him there is forgiveness.

[ 32 : 09 ] 1 John 1 8 and 9 if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

we may have been taken to the depths we may have felt the weight of our sin we may be able to readily identify with that sinking feeling but as we confess our sin and don't try to hide it there is forgiveness there is salvation.

And the final point here is assurance. The psalmist by the second half of verse 4 he's beginning to write about the assurance that a Christian a believer needs to know.

He's writing here as a saved sinner but note that the psalm doesn't finish on verse 4 with you there is forgiveness. Yes by verse 4a the beginning of it there is the promise the realisation of salvation but from verse 4b through to the end of the psalm we see some of the marks of the saved person that bring with them assurance and we need that assurance because we go through periods where we struggle with a lack of assurance so we have some marks of assurance here as the psalm comes to an end.

[ 34 : 11 ] Three marks. The first is the psalmist he has a fear of the Lord but with you there is forgiveness writes the psalmist therefore you are feared.

I've heard people say brashly in the past forgiving people is God's job. It's what he does.

He's in the business of forgiving people and it's said so lightly it's said as if it's almost their right. It's part of God's job description he just forgives so I can do what I want because God just forgives.

Now the truly saved person, the forgiven person would never say that or would never harbour that kind of an attitude. Spurgeon says none fear the Lord like those who have experienced his forgiving love.

Gratitude for pardon produces far more fear and reverence of God than all the dread which is inspired by punishment. It is grace which leads the way to holy regard of God and a fear of grieving him.

[ 35 : 29 ] When we are saved, when we are forgiven, when we are taken from the depths of our sin to the heights of salvation, we are blown away by the wonder of God's grace shown to us.

We are amazed that God would show such forgiveness, such salvation to even us. And we can sing with Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Wesley's brother, and can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?

Died he for me who caused his pain for me who him to death pursued? Amazing love, how can it be that thou my God should die for me?

See, when we are truly forgiven, when we are saved, when we feel the cleansing blood of Christ purifying our souls, that produces a fear of the Lord, a loving, reverent, restraining fear of God.

That's one of the marks of the saved person. It's one of the marks of assurance. the second mark here of assurance is that there's a desire to be with God.

[ 36 : 56 ] Verse 5, I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the morning. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen, wait for the morning, more than watchmen, wait for the morning.

seems like a long time ago since I've been to Edinburgh for any meetings, but in the past when I would go to Edinburgh for meetings, I would get off the plane, head out of the airport and go to the wee kiosk where you could buy the ticket for the bus that took you into the city centre.

And I have to say that when I went to the kiosk, yes there was a man that sold me the ticket, but I spent no time with him. He just gave me the ticket that I needed and I was on my way.

Now some people look at God that way. Some people talk almost in terms of getting an insurance policy for eternity, they want a ticket for heaven.

And once they get their ticket, once they say the sinner's prayer, once they come to the front of the church and some evangelistic meeting, they believe they have their ticket and they just get on with their life as if nothing had changed.

[ 38 : 15 ] Now a Christian wouldn't have that attitude or that outlook. A Christian is someone who is saved from sin and Satan and death and hell.

But a Christian is someone who realises that they, that we are saved for and saved into a relationship with God.

The person who has made some emotional confession of faith many moons ago but whose life has never changed a jot, who doesn't have that desire and that determination to be with God, can't really have any assurance of salvation.

Assurance of salvation is found and it's kept as we make time and as we take time to be with the Lord.

We have that desire, we have that determination to be with the Lord. We want to be those who are waiting upon him, trusting in his word, putting our hope in him.

[ 39 : 28 ] And Gomery Boyce says, what specifically is the psalmist waiting for? He's not waiting for forgiveness, for the earlier stanza says that he already found forgiveness, he is waiting for God himself.

Calvin says as the night watchman waits for the dawn, so the psalmist steadfastly looked to God. Or perhaps it may mean, says Calvin, as the watchman is awake before all others to open the city gates, so the psalmist awakens early to seek God.

But in both these cases that Calvin proposes, there is that desire, there's that determination to want to be with the Lord. That suggestion that Calvin makes strikes me as has been a good spiritual discipline for us to follow in terms of application.

Calvin said there, it may mean as the watchman is awake before all others to open the city gates, so the psalmist awakens early to seek God.

God, a good spiritual discipline for us to follow would be first thing in the morning, before we pick up any phones, before we check any emails or text messages, before we check notifications on social media, before we let anyone else even see our face, we should seek God's face.

[ 41 : 08 ] we should take time, spend time with him. That's the second mark of assurance.

There's the fear of the Lord, there's the desire to be with God, and finally here, there's that determination to tell people about the Lord. Verse 7, 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. The psalmist noticed he's determined to tell Israel about what he has experienced.

There's that earnestness, there's that fervor, there's that passion. O Israel, he says, put your trust in the Lord. He wants Israel, he wants all of God's people to experience what he has experienced, in terms of being taken from the depths of sin to the heights, the security of salvation.

He wants Israel, he wants his fellow man, he wants the people around him to know this redemption. And that makes sense, doesn't it?

[ 42 : 29 ] When we have good news, we want to share it. something in us, we're compelled to share it. The converted Wesley, after he went from Aldersgate, having received salvation, he certainly shared the gospel message that he had now taken hold of.

One writer writes, Wesley traveled widely, generally on horseback, preaching two or three times each day. Stephen Tompkins writes that Wesley rode 250,000 miles, gave away 30,000 pounds, and preached more than 40,000 sermons.

He was determined to tell people about the Lord. Lane, the commentator, says the soul, which has truly experienced forgiveness and reconciliation, wants everyone to share it and does its utmost to encourage them.

See, if we've gone from the depths of sin to the heights of salvation, we, like Wesley, we, like the psalmist, will be determined to tell people about that.

And remember, as we finish, we have more to tell. the psalmist looked forward to the forgiveness, to the redemption that he longed for and he received, but he didn't know how that redemption, how that forgiveness would come.

[ 44 : 10 ] We look back to the cross and we see how that forgiveness came, through the blood of Christ.

Christ. We see who the redeemer is, the Lord Jesus. And we have a commission, Matthew 28, to go and tell the world about him.

And as we do, that in itself is another mark of assurance for us and for others that we truly are saved.

saved. So sometimes it's good to be in the depths. It's because God loves us that he takes us sometimes to the depths and shows us our sin in order that we will confess our sin and receive his salvation and know the blessed assurance of that salvation in our lives.

so may God enable us to, like the psalmist, look to the Lord, to wait upon the Lord and to know this blessing in our lives.

[ 45 : 30 ] Amen. God has reached for me and pulled me from the raging sea.

The grace of God has reached for me and pulled me from the raging sea.

And I am safe on this solid ground. The Lord is my salvation.

I will not fear when darkness falls. His strength will help me scale these walls.

I'll see the dawn of the rising sun. The Lord is my salvation. salvation.

[ 46 : 59 ] Who is like the Lord our God, strong to save, faithful in love?

My debt is paid and the victory won. the Lord is my salvation.

My hope is hidden in the Lord. He fulfills each promise of his word.

When winter fades, I know spring will come. The Lord is my salvation. In times of waiting, times of need, when I know loss, when I am weak, I know his grace will renew these days.

The Lord is my salvation. Who is like the Lord our God, strong to save, faithful in love?

[ 48 : 31 ] My debt is paid and the victory won. The Lord is my salvation. salvation.

And when I reach my final day, he will not leave me in the grave, but I will rise, he will call me home.

The Lord is my salvation. glory be to the Lord the Lord our God, strong to save, faithful in love.

My debt is paid and the victory won. The Lord is my salvation.

glory be to God the Father, glory be to God the Son, glory be to God the Spirit, the Lord is our salvation.

[ 49 : 54 ] the Lord is our salvation. glory be to God the Father, glory be to God the Son, glory be to God the Spirit, glory be to God the Spirit, glory be to God the Spirit, glory be Lord the Lord is our salvation, the Lord is our salvation, the Lord is our salvation.

do and hear Amen.