

Psalm 130 “Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord.”,

A sermon by Tony Archer

This this psalm speaks of how we can come to God in our brokenness, in our sin, in our in our struggles and to find hope. I was reading James Montgomery Boyce who said as you as you look at commentaries on the Psalms after about Psalm 119 they seem to diminish and just give a few little trinkets on the last few psalms. But when they get to Psalm 130 they often expand and there's a number of key books and key commentaries on Psalm 130 itself.

It's such an important psalm. Martin Luther called it a Pauline psalm. Of course, it was written before the Apostle Paul, but it has many of the themes that Paul would speak of.

John Wesley, you may not know this, before his conversion, he was converted as he was listening to someone just read out from Martin Luther's commentary on Romans. That's why you should read commentaries just from time to time. and but before that happened, his heart was elevated earlier by hearing the choir sing Psalm 130.

it's called a psalm of a sense. It's one of a number in this section of the psalms that are called a a song of a sense. and ascent of course means to go up. it it's often thought that these psalms were gathered together as the pilgrims the Jewish pilgrims would go up to Jerusalem for the great old covenant festivals like Passover and others that they would go up to. And so these were psalms to give hope to those who were in exile. And in a sense, we're all in exile, aren't we? We're all not in our true home. we're a little bit alienated here where we've got a home that the Lord has been preparing for us.

And these songs speak to us.

And so he begins in verse one by saying, "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord." Out of the depths. Some people at times get totally overwhelmed and we all do, don't we? We get overwhelmed by what's happening. I've got some friends who like to look at conspiracy theories and they get overwhelmed by what they see going on and what they think they understand.

They go down rabbit holes and I and I feel particularly sorry for those who do not have any belief in God because they feel that they've got to solve all the world's problems. They've got to fix everything and it's them against the world and they're at the mercy of whatever forces are arrayed against humanity.

the reality is is God knows everything about those things. Nothing catches God by surprise. In fact, in Psalm two, he speaks about the world conspiring against God and gathering

together and coming up with their plans and the Lord sits in heaven and he laughs. He doesn't laugh because he's aloof or not interested. He laughs because he knows that these great attempts to destroy and to elevate themselves will ultimately come to nothing.

But this is not just for those who are overwhelmed by the by the world and there's enough in the world to trouble us. this psalm is for those who are overwhelmed because of their life, because of their situation, maybe single parents, maybe small business owners who are struggling to make things work. maybe those who are who are sick, who are unwell, who've received difficult diagnosis.

maybe to those who are lonely. to those who have lost big we we've seen the fires and people have lost their whole house. to those who are divorced who are facing struggles in their family for those who are despairing who are struggling to find hope for the future. it's difficult to go on when you when you don't see any hope for what's to come.

for those who are overwhelmed and convicted by their sin, their own sin is their biggest battle is themselves. they just can't achieve and do and be all that they know they should be and want to be.

And so the psalmist himself is in the depths. He says, "Out of the depths, I cry to you." Israel had a a thing about the sea. They didn't like the sea.

It was it was called chaos. There was a chaos monster. it was a place you couldn't control. when you're on a boat, much as like when you're on an airplane, you're at the mercy of the of the vessel that you're in and the person who's in charge of that and it's a place where you can't control the outcome. And when and so when he says out of the depths, he's imagining himself underwater, struggling, waves and tides and currents all at war. And he says, "Out of these depths, I cry to you, Lord." it's a great lesson for us that when we're in this sort of place, when we're overwhelmed, there is one good and right response and it's to cry out to you. when Jesus was on the cross, he said, "My Lord, my Lord, why have you forsaken me?" And people often think that's a a a point where he had he had a weak faith. But actually that was a point of strong faith because when he felt completely overwhelmed even that the father had turned his face away, he continued to hold on to God. He continued to look to God and he cried out to God. And so when you cry out to the Lord out of the depths, when you cry out of trouble and disappointment and concern and questioning and but you're still looking to God, you're still holding on to God.

then you are doing what the Bible urges us to do in 150 psalms. you are doing what God calls us to do.

Unfaithfulness is to pack up your bag and say, "I'm done with this. I'm going to go find

something else that will help me." But he here in the depths in despair and trouble and pressure that was building he cries out to the Lord. you remember what it was said of the Holy Spirit that God puts his holy spirit in us so that we can cry out to God as abba father and and that crying out is what's in in in mind here crying out to the Lord that we have someone who will listen to us.

and so we cry out we cry out to God and we wait for him to come through. Martin Luther said this, "Crying is nothing but a strong and earnest longing for God's grace which does not arise in a person unless he sees in what depth he is lying." , in other words, you can't really experience God's grace until you see the depth of your own situation. , and that that's certainly true before you come to Christ. You can't really see your need of a saviour until you understand just how ghastly your own sin is, your own sin that caused Jesus to have to go to the cross and take your punishment.

And so, we cry out to the Lord and then we start to ask questions. we start to wonder if our prayers are getting through. And so in verse two, he says, "Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy." What if God doesn't listen? What if it's been too many times? What if God is tired?

Or what if God is busy? Lord, hear my voice. He says, "Maybe God is there for other people. Maybe God is interested in other people, but not for me. , I'm too bad or I'm in too dark a place.

And yet we have these great promises, don't we, all over the scriptures. Psalm 139 verse 8, if I go to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. John 6:37, all those the father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.

Hebrews 4:16, the great encouragement.

Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

God is not too busy. God is not overwhelmed. God nothing takes God by surprise. he can laugh at all the conspiracies of the world. he can certain certainly deal with your situation. In fact, he delights to deal with your situation. And Jesus says come to your father and bring your request before him the same way you would do with your own father. but here you have a heavenly father who has shown his love for you.

And then he comes to a another question.

What if I'm too far gone? What about my own unworthiness?

And he begins maybe to be overwhelmed with his own sinful state. He says in verse three,

"Lord, if you kept a record of sins, who could stand for God to keep a record of sins would mean that he remembers them. He keeps note of them. He guards and watch over them. He preserves them. He doesn't throw them into the sea as Micah 7:19 speaks of. we would truly deserve to be sinking. We would be standing on the ocean and sinking down quickly." what if God kept our sins? What if God remembered our sins? That's why we love those promises, don't we, in the scriptures where it says God remembers our sins no more? Martin Luther asks this question. He says, "What good would it do if all creatures were gracious to me and disregarded and forgave my sins, but God marked and retained them?" And then again, what does it matter if all creatures heap sins upon me and hold them against me as long as God forgives and pays no attention to them?

He's so encouraged by the promise of forgiveness. We see this in verse 4. when I was at Warburton, I I wanted to encourage the people in our church by the testimonies of God's people. And I I just brought this book called Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners by John Bunyan. I thought that'll be a good a good read because that's he's written Pilgrim's Progress which some say is the second biggest selling book after the Bible. it's such an encouraging book. But I so I gave this book that I hadn't read to this older lady in the church. And a few weeks later um her sister came to me and she says, "What is that book you've given my sister? She's just totally depressed now. what have you done? And I thought, what's this about? And I I later found out that if you read Grace Abounding to the chief of sinners, John Bunyan was a man whose spirit was tormented. He was depressed and and he'd get the gospel and then he'd get overwhelmed by his sin and then he would think he was unworthy and then a verse would speak of how God's grace is greater than all our sin and he'd and he'd be restored for a few days and then he would sink again. and he spent years coming to a place of assurance and it is quite troubling to read it but it's those promises that finally bring him through and eventually he comes to that place of assurance because he realizes it's it's based on what Jesus has done and his grace is greater than all our sin I was reading I'm I've been reading a an account of his life it's like it's a biography and he says it's because of these deep trials because he dealt with these things so heavily in his heart that he became such an effective preacher and such an effective writer because he understood the depths of human depravity. He understood the questions. And so when you've struggled spiritually, when you've gone through difficult times, when you have questions, as God has brought you through those things, and sometimes it can be months and even years, don't be surprised what God might do through bringing you through those deep travails.

but here's the promise. Verse four, with you, but with you, and that's an important but but

with you there is forgiveness from the Anglican prayer book.

Sometimes we say these words, I sneak them in to the Presbyterian order of service when we have the Lord's supper. We do not presume to come to this your table, oh merciful

Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your many and great mercies.

You are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. wonderful words, aren't they?

You are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy.

And so John Bunyan writes about the times that the devil would torment him and this happened often. but he came to that point of assurance. and he said the devil is angry because he's lost a sinner. there is a captive who has broken prison and run away from his master. And so the devil starts asking these questions. Sometimes, as I said at the beginning of the service, when you're spoken to, you need to speak back. The devil says things like this. What my own servant, my old servant, will you forsake me now? Having so often sold yourself to me to work, will you forsake me now, you horrible, rich, do you not full of sin? Do you not know that you have sent yourself beyond the reach of grace? And do you think you will find mercy now? Are you not a murderer, a thief, a harlot, a witch, a sinner of the greatest size? And do you look for mercy now? Do you think that Christ will foul his fingers with you? It is enough to make angels blush, says Satan, to see a vile, vile one knock at heaven's gate for mercy, and you would be so abominably bold to do it.

And Bunyan says, "Wh I granted the whole charge to be true." This is what he said in response.

Bunyan said to Satan's taunts, he said, "No." He says, "I am Magdalene. I am Zackeus. I am the thief. I am the harlot.

I am the publican. I am the prodigal and one of Christ's murderers. Yay, worse than any of these." And yet God was so far off from rejecting of me as I found afterwards that there was music and dancing in his house for me and for joy that I was coming home unto him.

These are the things the angels desire to look into. and Bunyan goes on to say this is the music which causes them that dwell on the highest orbs to open their windows, put out their heads and look down to see the cause of that glory. , in other words, I'm all those things you say, but Christ has dealt with it and now celebrates me as his son or his daughter.

And so he goes on to say, so that we can with reverence serve you. In fact, until we know this forgiveness, we can't really serve God, in the ESV, it says, "But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared." , and you might think that's a bit odd. If we're forgiven, why would we be fearful? That seems the opposite of what you'd expect. But what he means by that is when we're forgiven by God, there's a and we really understand the depth of our

sin, the wonder of the cross, the extent of forgiveness, there's an awe that comes as we look to God. Sam Storms, he summarized it like this.

he said, "Forgiveness as much as any act of God reveals his incomprehensible greatness and majesty. The infinitely transcendent God of holiness and truth has acted in grace on behalf of hell deserving sinners. And once the reality of this is fully grasped, the only reasonable response is one of brokenness, humility, and breathtaking awe at such amazing love." , and if God's forgiveness doesn't lead to the fear of God, the respect of God, the wonder of God, , you probably haven't fully understood it. , Thomas Adams put it like this. He says, "No man more truly loves God than he that is most fearful to offend him." , because you have a deep relationship now with him. Christopher Ash who's written on the Psalms, he says, "Only forgiven people are set free to worship God with loving, reverent fear." Only forgiven people are set free. And the alternative to not being forgiven or not appreciating your forgiveness is to either reduce God. God doesn't really care. God's not really interested or to minimize sin. My sin is not that bad. That's how people deal with it. far better to know the depths of our sin and to know the forgiveness that we have in the Lord Jesus.

We come to another question in terms of the depths. He's got forgiveness, but he still may be overwhelmed. He still might be not everything's fixed. You notice when you get forgiven, you're not perfect. There's still some areas to work on.

What if the answer doesn't come? What if what if nothing changes?

it's not immediate. what if what if the way through this? There's so many things against me. What if there's no way through? I can't see the way through. I don't think it's possible.

Here's his answer in verse 5. I wait for the Lord. My whole being waits. Instead of running off to an alternate God, to an alternate fix, to an alternate solution, he waits for the Lord.

it's a shallow piety indeed which which doesn't struggle with waiting which thinks that I'm being forgiven now so everything's fixed all is well once we have found God we go on and seek him we go on and seek for him to work his way in us and in our in our situation in our families and in our world while we may be justified by grace and granted a forgiveness by faith. we still wait, don't we, for our final redemption. There is still much that needs fixing in our lives and around us.

And so we wait patiently.

We wait on the Lord. and that's the mark of the believer. He doesn't get impatient. I I once asked people, is there any sin that doesn't have an element of impatience in it? And I don't think I found one yet, but keep trying.

We'll work on it.

Almost every sin, there's some kind of impatience there. The psalmist is waiting. And there's this lovely word here, too. And in his word, I put my hope. that just keeps us from presumption. I've been praying for this car for so long. I'm going to get an XJ Jaguar, whatever they call it. I'm going to get one of those really good Jaguars and I'm just going to trust in the Lord and I'm going to wait on him. In his word, I put my hope. We need to base our confidence on God, but also on what he's promised in his word. the waiting and the hope is in his word, his covenant promises. if we don't have the support of his word, then it's just wishful thinking and waiting in vain. now sometimes we have a fragile sense that God is doing or will do something. And as much as it matches God's word and character and will, we can hope for specific details.

Sometimes and in fact all the time we have to leave the results to him and how those details work out. we don't just give the Lord though our first option. He is our only option ultimately because an answer from an illegitimate place is betrayal. some people wait and hope for something God has promised that's not actually what God has promised.

and because it's not based on his word.

And sometimes Christians go to places that are not godly for spiritual answers. I was listening to a man called Cernovich. He's an influencer. he's f he's he describes himself as a Christian and he was speaking in this interview about how he he went to some therapy that was based on taking some kind of drug I can't even name it it's called DMT and as he took this drug he could feel snakes sliding in his body and awakening himself and he found this treatment helpful and he and he credits this this treatment as being helpful in bringing him to Christ because it it knocked him out. It it helped him to see the reality of of who he was. but the problem of that kind of thing and he writes about this treatment as a deep spiritual work and plant medicine hallucinogenic and the whole works. the problem with this kind of thing is you open yourself up to be taken advantage of by the devil. And in his case he sees it's worked in in a good way and he and he describes himself as a Christian. in other cases it might be it might result in great spiritual bondage. and for all we know there may be bondage already involved. We don't look to other spiritual sources.

It's Christ and Christ alone. And it doesn't mean we don't turn to legitimate helps like medicine. but in even in these things we look to God and we look to God in the midst of being helped. in his word I put my hope. That's where my hope is in the God and in the word. in verse six he says I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. More than watchmen wait for the morning.

more than some children wait for Christmas morning. , if you can think of a watchman, you

know, you want to be in bed, you want to be asleep, but you're in charge to look out for danger until the morning light comes and everything's revealed. Your job is to just keep awake, keep alert. And so, the watchman can't wait until the morning comes and his job is finished.

, the psalmist says, I'm like that watchman, eagerly looking to God, eagerly waiting for God. and this is in contrast to God who doesn't watch and fixate on our sins. in contrast to that, we watch God and we're fixated on him and we must be fixed on him.

And in the final verses as the psalmist talks about how God in God he's found forgiveness and in God he waits and he trusts. in the final verses he says, "What's good for me is also good for you. And so he says, "Israel, put your hope in the Lord. For with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full rede redemption. All that you need and all that you hope for is found in the Lord." And he can say this from a personal angle. He can say this from his own personal angle from his own experience. He can say this to each one of you.

But he can also speak corporately. He speaks to the whole of Israel. this may be someone like Nehemiah speaking to to the nation. he can speak to we can speak to the church and we can urge the whole church to put your hope in the Lord.

it's a call to everyone. it's not just an individual. It's a call to everyone here. This applies to everyone.

To put your hope in the Lord. and how does he do it? verse eight, the answer is he does it. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Of course, this is looking to Jesus who is the answer to sin who takes away the power and the penalty and even the presence of sin. Jesus is the answer.

He will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Titus 2:14 picks this up when it says that Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own eager to do what is good. And so I ask that you be encouraged by what you see here. That you no matter what depths you find yourself in might know the promises of forgiveness that are found in Jesus. for those things that still need to be worked out that you might wait on the Lord and hope in him and trust in his word and that and that you might know that that what Jesus has begun he will bring to completion. John Calvin said on this. He said that that for himself what supported his patience was the confidence which he found when he rested on the divine promises.

And he says with these promises taken away the grace of God would necessarily vanish from outside and that our hearts then would fail and we would be overwhelmed with despair.

indeed the insurance the assurance of the word he says is the mother of waiting for patience

and so may your trust may it be in the things that are rock solid the word of God and the god of the word indeed the god of the world. Let us pray.