

## **Psalm 130**

### **“Out of the Depths”**

#### **Psalm 130:1-8**

A Song of Ascents.

<sup>1</sup> Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

<sup>2</sup> O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

<sup>3</sup> If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

<sup>5</sup> I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

<sup>6</sup> my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

<sup>8</sup> And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

#### **• What is a Psalm?**

A psalm is a song and a prayer. Some of you may like praise but find sermons boring and tedious, or you may want more praise and shorter sermons. I often hear this from different ones. But don't worry! Today is that day!

Praise is also known as a prayer set to a melody. Why do we love praise?

I think it is because the content of the lyrics is connected to our own feelings. And moreover, I think that the addition of a good melody and musical accompaniment has the effect of raising one's feelings even more. It also has the effect of expressing hidden feelings. The lyrics of a song contribute especially to this.

In the time when this psalm was written, people were probably joining their hearts and minds together, borrowing the words of the psalm to express their feelings toward God and their prayers as the community of Israel.

The Psalms are the prayers and songs of the ancient Hebrews.

This particular psalm is entitled “A Song of the Ascents.” This Hebrew word translated “ascending,” *ma'arah*, means “going up,” or “going up the steps.” It may have been sung as they ascended the steps in the temple, or by those who returned from the Babylonian captivity. Or it may have been a prayer sung by the Jews to prepare their hearts for worship on their journey up to the holy city of Jerusalem.

This Psalm 130 ascends out of the depths to praise the Lord at the end. Since it is such a song, it may be aptly titled a song of ascent to the city. The psalm is said to have been composed during the period of Nehemiah after the captivity. Famously, Martin Luther loved this Psalm 130 very much.

- **Psalm 130 (The Depths)**

Let's look together at Psalm 130.

*Psalm 130:1. "Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!"*

For the Jews, the "depths" and the sea were symbols of Hades. It was a dark place separated from God; a cold place away from him. A place that was the farthest from God, a place cut off from fellowship with him. It was a place where you could cry out to God, but he would not hear you.

The psalmist believes that to cry out from such a place, is faith. Faith may be to cry out to God in a place where we feel abandoned by God, rather than in a place full of God's grace.

*Psalm 130:2. "O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!"*

He cries out to the Lord with all his might from the depths of the abyss, from a place like the bottom of the deepest ocean of the darkest Hades. His voice is dying, and he is about to run out of strength, but he continues to cry out to the Lord, "Lord, hear me!" He asks the Lord to listen to his prayer. Even though it is up to God whether he will hear or not, he cannot help but cry out. He must have had a hope that God would hear him. "I have no other hope but in You, O Lord, please listen to my words."

- **Keeping Account of Iniquities**

*Psalm 130:3. "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"*

What separates the Lord from the psalmist? It is unrighteousness. What is unrighteousness? It may be a wrongdoing, a bad heart, an evil deed, or a sense of guilt for something I have done. Therefore, "I am helpless before You, and I cannot hide before You, for You know everything." The Lord is the One who knows everything in the whole world--the whole universe. Even the smallest mistake or bad thought cannot be hidden. The Lord knows everything that is in their hearts. From the perspective of the universe, human beings are invisible, but even a person who is invisible from the perspective of the universe, God pays attention to and knows everything in his heart. Who can stand before such a God? No one.

*Psalm 130:4. "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."*

When the Israelites went up to the city of Jerusalem and entered the temple, they confessed their sinfulness and said, "The Lord has mercy on us, even though we are sinful." When they thought of the forgiveness that was available to them, they no doubt turned to praise God. For the Lord is love, and he is the God of mercy.

- **The Hope of the Night Watchmen**

*Psalm 130:5,6. "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."*

The longing with which we wait for the Lord is expressed in the metaphor of the night watchmen waiting for the dawn.

The night watchman may be the one who guards the temple, so that the night may end safely and securely. When dawn breaks, they rest assured that they will be released from the tension that may have been mounting. They may have been waiting for the sunrise with the thought that their lives would be spared, and they would be able to finish their duties safely.

Or it may be a reference to the Levites serving in the temple and waiting to offer the sacrifices to the Lord at dawn. It may be that in the darkness of such a night, they are impatiently waiting for that first sign of another day, the morning sunlight.

In the same way, we are eagerly waiting for the Lord to speak to us.

Isn't that a picture of how we can express our gratitude and devotion to God once again?

I believe there are two major events in Israel's history behind this psalm: the Exodus and the Babylonian Captivity. God delivered them from Egypt and from Babylon. It's as though they are saying with one voice, "I will wait for you. I will wait and hope in you."

### ● **The Depths**

What does the deep abyss, guilt, and deep sorrow look like to you?

I had three siblings. I am the eldest, and I had a younger sister and a younger brother. But my youngest brother died in a motorcycle accident when he was 19 years old. I was 22.

In my mind, my brother still looks the same as he did at 19, and I sometimes wonder how he would have grown up if he had lived. I am sure I would have tried my best to lead him to Christ and hopefully he would have become a Christian. Perhaps he would have become as committed as I am.

After his death, I was led to church. The sermon taught that those who believe in God can go to heaven and those who don't believe in God go to hell. I wondered if my brother who had died, went to hell. If so, Japan, where not even 1% of the population are Christians, must be going to hell. Is God like that? God wants everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4) I still struggle to understand what happens when we die.

- **The Gospel**

Here is something very important. Please listen carefully.

As a result of my studies in seminary, the understanding I have of the gospel is this. Heaven is not the goal to go to, but rather, the goal is for God to come to this earth. And those who believe in God will be given new bodies and reunited here on earth. God's purpose is for Him to dwell in our world. God is with us. That is the meaning of the Hebrew name for God, "Immanuel." God is Immanuel. I hope you will remember this.

What does this mean?

God intervened in this human world by making a covenant with Abraham to restore his relationship with mankind. Through the tabernacle, He dwelt among us. Then He became incarnate in Jesus Christ and took up residence in this world. Through the atonement of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus, the power of death, that wall of separation, was destroyed, and the Holy Spirit takes up residence in each person who acknowledges and confesses that Jesus Christ is God and Lord. Finally, with Jesus as King, the heavenly temple comes down and the reign of God begins in full.

The Kingdom of God is already in our midst. It is through those who believe in God that God's Kingdom and rule is being extended.

- **What is the Rule of God?**

God's rule is not the kind of dominion that holds others down by force or violence. God's dominion comes through the peaceful way of loving our neighbors and even our enemies. By showing us how to live a life of service to others, a life of seeking peace and loving others even unto death, the Lord Jesus showed us the way to establish the rule that is the true peace of God in this world. That is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Kingdom of God.

- **My Father's Suffering**

I think it is my father who has experienced the deepest abyss. After I believed in God, I enthusiastically conveyed the message of the gospel to my parents. At that time, my father said, "If God is love, why didn't he help your brother? If God says He loves us, then He should treat us all equally." My father refused to believe in a God who would not be fair.

At that time, I did not have the right words to say. But what I did know is that it is not God's will for me to live with such a burden.

A few years later I made a commitment to follow the Lord in preparing for the ministry of speaking His Word. I am praying that my father will be able to surrender his burdens to God.

When the Kingdom of God is brought to completion, what will happen to those who die without having heard the gospel? We don't know, and we must admit that there are things we do not know.

But God is speaking to us who are alive now. It seems to me that he is saying, "I will carry that burden with you, and we will go through life together." As I said at the beginning, a psalm is a prayer that appeals from a person to God. You can appeal to God for those thoughts. You can say what is in your heart. God will receive them. If we don't have such a place, we will take it on ourselves and end up being crushed by the burden.

- **Wait for the Lord**

In verse 7, God calls on Israel as a whole, to wait for the Lord. The psalmist tells us that in the Lord there is grace, and there is redemption.

There are many things we do not understand. But our hope lies in the truth that we can surrender our burdens to God. I believe that since God is righteous, He will prevail over our thoughts and rule all things righteously.

Also, our true hope and confidence is that when the Kingdom of God is completed, it will be a world where there will be no more sorrow, no more tears, and no more strife. For the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God, will return as King on earth to rule this world. The Kingdom of God, which is perfect peace, will be complete. At that time, God will completely deliver us from all the depths.

Wait on the Lord, O Israel, is a call to God's people. In the Lord there is steadfast love and abundant redemption. We have been made part of God's people through the atonement and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. As God's people, the call to wait is a call to us, as well.

In the Lord there is steadfast love and abundant redemption.

God is the righteous One, the One who is able to completely rule all things. We are allowed to appeal to Him. Are there any worries that I am not aware of, any errors that have become an abyss to me? I have many. I often wonder if I should be allowed to go on speaking God's word. But God is listening. I don't know how God will answer me, and it may not be in the way I think it will be. This is in his timing.

God does not want anyone to live with torment, guilt, mistakes, etc. that put us in the depths. He sacrificed His own Son so that we could surrender these things to him. Our healing comes in our communion with God.

And when Christ comes, he will bring a world without sorrow, without tears, without strife. As we wait for the Lord with that hope, let us call out to those around us and to all people that there is hope in God!

**Prayer:**

Gracious Heavenly Father, we praise Your holy name. We sometimes think that the world is unfair, that it is unreasonable. We wonder why the innocent should suffer. But thank you that you have opened the way through the atonement of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection, so that all may be able to lay down their burdens in you. I thank You that You loved the world so much that You gave Your only begotten Son to the world. I long for you. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ for the completion of the Kingdom of God, and that all may receive your grace. Amen.