

July 28, 2024

“Expectant Watchfulness”  
Lesson 4

Psalms 130

### **Intro**

Psalms 130 is part of a group of psalms (120-134) that are usually called the Psalms of Ascents. They work together to express a wide variety of moods and concerns. Together, they allow the worshipping community to express anxiety and hope, fear and trust, sorrow and joy. They help worshippers bring their entire lives to God, to share their lives with each other, and eagerly await God’s transforming work in their lives.

Psalms 130 begins with a cry to God, as most laments do. But it is different from most laments in that it is much shorter and does not do all the things a normal lament does. Perhaps this is because it is part of a group of psalms, and other psalms of lament in the group do contain more of the traditional lengths and elements of a lament. Collectively, these psalms put the one praying in the correct spiritual position before God.

### **Read Psalms 130**

1. vs. 1: The psalmist begins by crying out to God “out of the depths”
  - Depths could be referring to the deepness of the sea
    - Many fear deep water and the potential for drowning in it
  - Depths could also refer to Sheol (see Num. 16:30-33)
    - Sheol was under the earth and generally considered far from God’s presence
    - No one worshipped God there
  - The writer says he is called to God “out of the depths”
    - He feels like he is in a place far from God and full of danger and fear
  - The call to God is a cry for God to listen to the caller, and to help that one
  - The verse reminds us that no matter how “deep” our situations are, we can call out to God
  
2. vs. 2: The two phrases here are asking for the same thing: for God to listen and respond
  - The first phrase specifically asks God to hear the speaker’s voice (just like vs. 1)
  - This shows how important it is to the speaker to have God’s attention
  - The second phrase shows that the speaker has called to God for mercy
  - Whatever the need is, the speaker knows only God can solve it
  - Several other psalms also express a call for God’s help
    - All these psalms expect that God desires to listen to sincere requests for help
    - They also expect that God will respond with speed and compassion
    - It’s important to remember that God’s timing is not our timing
    - It’s also important to remember that just because we don’t feel like God has heard/answered doesn’t mean He hasn’t or won’t

3. vs. 3: The question asked here is a great reminder of how merciful God is toward us  
 Each person has a long list of things done wrong, much longer than we can bear  
 To “keep a record” shows paying especially close attention to something  
 God could be keeping a list of everything each person has done wrong  
 Those lists would be immense, and there would be no avoided the guilt  
 Here the psalmist is acknowledging to having committed sins that deserve punishment  
 This is reflected in vs. 2 as well, where he cries to God for mercy  
 An appeal to God’s mercy also carries with it a commitment to reform
4. vs. 4: This verse begins with “But”, indicating a contrasting idea from vs. 3  
 God could keep a list of wrongs, but instead chooses to forgive  
 God’s inclination, his desire, is to forgive whenever possible  
 The outcome of this is awe/reverence, from which the people serve God  
 Divine gentleness, rather than wrath, inspires awe because it seems so opposite  
 Humans are inclined to be wrathful towards those who do them wrong  
 Why shouldn’t / wouldn’t God be the same?  
 In contrast to how people behave, God exercises mercy  
 This mercy leads people to want to serve God, in awe and reverence
5. vs. 5: The Hebrew word translated “whole being” can also be translated as “soul”  
 The word in Hebrew suggests more than we think of that word, however  
 The Ancient Israelites thought of humans as an integrated whole  
 Body and soul were together, rather than two separate entities  
 The soul was the animating force for the body  
 This corresponds well to the Christian belief in the resurrection  
 We believe that the body gets resurrected as well as the soul (I Cor. 15:50-57)  
 The phrase “my whole being waits” suggests that the psalmist highly anticipates this  
 We might use the phrase “He’s on the edge of his seat” about his anticipation  
 The second phrase says that the psalmist puts his hope in God’s word  
 To hope is a parallel thought to waiting for the Lord in the first half  
 The hope here seems to refer to God’s promise of salvation, first given to Abraham
6. vs. 6: The psalmist here repeats that he waits for the Lord “more than watchmen wait for the morning”  
 The watchmen’s job is to keep watch, to always be on the lookout  
 Being a watchman would call for a high degree of attention to the job  
 This high degree of focus is what the psalmist is highlighting  
 His waiting for God to act as promised is as intense as the watchmen on duty  
 As we have seen before, this require hope/faith in God’s future actions
7. vs. 7: The next two verses shift the focus, from an individual to the whole community  
 This type of shift occurs regularly in psalms of lament  
 The one here, however, occurs without any kind of transition; it’s very sudden  
 The hope in God’s unfailing love is something for the community now, not just him  
 The word “redemption” here is a legal term  
 It’s a term often applied to buying slaves for the purpose of freeing them  
 Here, however, the liberation is from the oppression of human sin

The psalm anticipated God freeing Israel from sin's power  
This is the ultimate redemption that we all hope for and wait for

8. vs. 8: As most laments do, the psalm ends with an expression of deep trust in God  
It moves the reader from focusing on the individual to God's care for all the people  
God's great mercy provides the hope for Israel  
God will "redeem Israel from all their sins"  
Christians today are the spiritual descendants of this promise of God to redeem  
Because He forgives people today, we can imitate that action in our relationships

Application: This psalm speaks to a faith that involves waiting for God's grace. During this waiting, a person may doubt God's ability or willingness to save; waiting for that salvation, especially in the face of the fact that it was promised, challenges every fiber of a person's being. Yet it is that challenge itself that strengthens faith in the long run. As this psalm makes clear, trust in God does not come without some doubts. Biblical faith is realistic and honest about hardship. But it does not remain there. The spiritual challenges we face—the depths of vs. 1—become opportunities for grace from God. Therefore, learning the discipline of waiting is part of learning to live with God and all others who are also awaiting God's help. This psalm shows our profound need and desire for God's presence. And we can speak to God any time, especially in the most desperate moments of our lives. In our darkest moments, we need to cry out to God and remember to keep hoping in his saving works.

Prayer: Almighty God, please hear our cries to You that come from our sin and our brokenness and the depths of our despairs. Do not forget us in the day of our distress, and help us not to forget to be thankful when You have rescued us in whatever form You choose. In Jesus' name, Amen.