

Psalm 130

Dear Fellow Believers Taking Every Care to the Lord in Prayer:

Parents try to raise their children to become independent so that, ultimately, they run to their parents less and less for help. It's a sign of maturity. On the other hand, interestingly, the Lord looks for just the opposite from his children. Spiritually mature Christians are not those who run less to their heavenly Father, but those who run to him more!

Today, as we look at the beautiful words of the Psalm of the Day (130), the inspired author goes to the Lord in prayer. Like him, we will also want to **"Cry Out to the Lord from the Depths"** (1) *Cry out for forgiveness*, and (2) *Cry out with a hopeful heart*.

1

If we made a music video of this Psalm (Psalms are songs), perhaps the opening scene would show someone huddled in the corner of a dark room crying. In great anguish, his or her voice sings in a mournful, minor key: ***"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 many times you and I can relate to this. All of us have dark days when we are frightened, confused, or filled with anguish. There are too many times, unfortunately, when we only cry out to the Lord for help when all else has failed. We sometimes treat prayer like a fire extinguisher to be used only in an emergency. And because of it, as the hymn says, ***"Oh, what needless pain we bear!"*** Martin Luther once said that the fact that God has to tell his children to pray shows how utterly sinful we are. Why should a loving Father, who is all powerful and has proved his love for us in Christ, have to command his people to pray? It should be as natural for us as sunflowers pointing toward the sun or birds singing on a summer morning.

The psalmist says, ***"Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to my cry!"*** Does God hear us? Every syllable. Are his ears attentive to our cries? Every moment. Another psalm reminds us, ***"Before a word is even on my tongue you know it completely, O Lord"*** (Ps. 139:4). He's not like us earthly fathers who often would rather watch the game on TV or read the paper than deal with a complaint or problem from a child. No, the Lord is always attentive and ready to listen and he can handle all of our request -- from all Christians at the same time!

The truth is, however, there is no earthly reason God *should* listen to us. ***"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?"*** The word "sin" here means a "twisting" or "perversion." We take something perfect and pure and we bend it completely out of shape. God says ***"This is love"*** - then he gives us his commandments as our guide to follow. And we, arrogant rebels that we are, beg to differ: ***"No, God, this is love! My way is better than your way."*** And what's the result? We plant seeds of destruction and impurity and hatred all over the earth like a viral pandemic. If we are truly honest about our natural selves, we have to admit that we are twisted in our minds, words, and actions. If the Lord ***"kept a record of our sins"*** the mountains of them would doom us!

But the Lord comes to the rescue! The psalmist says, ***"With you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared"*** (honored and respected). When Adam & Eve sinned in the garden, instead of immediately sending them to the pit of hell, God responded by promising that a Rescuer would come who would crush the devil's head. Of course, that Promised One came! The Savior did everything perfectly, but God gave you and me the credit for his perfection. And for all the bad things we do/say/think, Jesus absorbed the penalty. Because of Jesus, God ***"keeps no record of our sins."*** He holds nothing over our heads like we silly people do to one another with our petty grudges. No skeletons from the past are in the closet waiting to pop out when the door is opened to condemn us. ***"There is no record!"*** Jesus said it, ***"It is finished."*** Therefore, ***"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us"*** (Ps 103:12). What a huge relief!

So fellow Christians, when the guilt of our sins overwhelms us, “*out of the depths*” of that guilt and shame we can “*cry out to the Lord.*” And be assured, “*With him there is forgiveness!*” What joy will fill your heart when he personally tells you that when you take his Supper in a few minutes.

2

That good news also fills us with something else. It’s a beautiful word -- the word **hope**! The psalmist writes: “*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. ⁶ My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. ⁷ O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.*”

Hope is a wonderful word. Everyone needs to have hope. The other day on the news I saw how the poor, exhausted souls living in war-ravaged Afghanistan brightened up as they talked about a new hope in their lives if a truce can be settled between the Taliban and the Afghan and US forces. It’s something, finally, for them to look forward to and hope for after all these years!

Now, think of a **watchman** on the tower of the city of Jerusalem back in David’s time. You are the watchman. It’s nighttime, and you hear that the enemy is in the vicinity. So you keep your eyes peeled, scanning the dark landscape constantly to make sure there is no surprise attack being mounted. You tense up at every sound, ready to trumpet the alarm.

And then, finally, the sun begins to poke its head up over the eastern horizon. The new day is dawning. What you hoped for, no enemy attack, has come true. You breathe easier until your watch is over.

“*My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*” Every day you and I wait in expectation. We expect the enemy will attack. The Lord tells us he will -- and increasingly so as the Last Day approaches. We are on our guard so we are not caught unaware of flatfooted. But, at the same time, we are not hopeless. We also expect the Savior to return and end all battles by stuffing the enemy, Satan, in prison forever where he can never tempt or attack us again.

As Prof. P. Wendland wrote, “*Although Psalm 130 starts in the darkness, it ends in the dawn.*” Do you remember that music video we were working on earlier? The poor soul in the dark cries out in anguish to the Lord, but now the first rays of the light of the sun stretch over the land and warms and enlightens the heart of those crying out. There is hope!

Peter calls our hope a “*living hope*” (not an earthly “iffy” hope) based on Christ’s “*resurrection from the dead.*” As we begin this darker season of Lent contemplating our many sins that brought about Christ’s path to the cross, let’s always remember what’s coming at the other end: the light of the resurrection dawn; and the light of the everlasting life gained for us and given to us by our great Hope, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.