

Psalm 130

A Rescue Psalm

Read Psalm 130:1-2: This psalm is a cry for help. The psalmist is in a very bad place. He feels that his own mortality is right in front of him; with no clear path to escape. He is crying out of the depths. He could be literally in a well or a pit. It can also be figuratively in the depths and isolation of despair or in a hopeless situation. There are a number of places in the scriptures where the writer sees no way out. He is in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Imagine being Jonah. He was depressed and suicidal. He was way off track with God. He was going in the opposite direction. We lose our sense of purpose and zeal for life when we go our own way. He told his shipmates to just throw his body overboard. That would have been the end of Jonah...until God sent a huge fish to go get him. Jonah threw his life away; but God redeemed it.

Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. (Jonah 2:1-2)

Another example was how Joseph was thrown into a dry well and left to die by his brothers. They were planning on letting him die. That was the end of the story; until God sent Midianite traders. Sometimes our dark places and nightmares are not about sin. They are training for leadership and trusting God more than before.

So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. (Genesis 37:23-24)

Another similar psalm is Psalm 40. The psalmist is in the bottom of a muddy cistern (well) that he cannot climb out of. It is like being in quicksand at the bottom of a deep shaft. It is like a miniature hell that only God can save you from. As we thrash about to escape, we hopelessly sink down further. It is an absolutely hopeless situation leading to death. The more we complain and blame and curse our circumstances the deeper we twist ourselves downward. We are to trust God in every circumstance, even if we have to be forced to do so.

I waited patiently for the LORD; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a

rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the LORD. (Psalm 40:1-3)

Perhaps this was also what Jeremiah experienced when the King threw him into a dry well for preaching an unpopular message of repentance.

“Thus says the LORD: ‘He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes over to the Chaldeans shall live; his life shall be as a prize to him, and he shall live.’ Thus says the LORD: ‘This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon’s army, which shall take it.’ ”Therefore the princes said to the king, “Please, let this man be put to death, for thus he weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, by speaking such words to them. For this man does not seek the welfare of this people, but their harm.” Then Zedekiah the king said, “Look, he is in your hand. For the king can do nothing against you.” So they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the king’s son, which was in the court of the prison, and they let Jeremiah down with ropes. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire. So Jeremiah sank in the mire. (Jeremiah 38:2-6)

It's ironic that this is one of the Psalms of Ascent. This psalm supposedly represents getting one step closer to God. How can descending into darkness relate to rising to the light of God? There is a correlation between deep trouble and spiritual growth. When have you ever taken a big step towards God? It was probably not out of the clear blue sky. It is more likely in a crisis or under siege.

I can recall when our youngest son was out of state at college. He found himself in a situation where all of his friends had abandoned and rejected him. It is tough for someone as social as he is to be completely alone and cut off. His deepening anxieties turned into a big step towards God. He wept before the LORD; and God increased his faith. Almost all situations where a person embraces God in a bigger way are amidst fear and anxiety and impending doom.

A Psalm of Redemption

Read Psalm 130: 3-4: We get ourselves into all kinds of predicaments. Sometimes the cause of our problems is obvious and sometimes it is not. The psalmist sees his sin clearly now. He wants to be crystal clear about not blocking God's help when he needs it. Getting crushed and smelling your own mortality is very clarifying. We will see things more accurately. Our compromises seem to emerge from our subconsciousness. He sees his sin and moral failure

everywhere...in all of his actions and thoughts. He says if God put a *checkmark* on every evil thought and action his life would be covered with checkmarks. He is being forced to look at his life.

I know a guy who was a believer who had developed a severe back problem. He was confined to his bed for months. God incapacitated him to gain his total attention. He was just too busy to take time for God. Sometimes we have to be forcibly removed from the outside world activities to hear God.

Consider being Joseph or Jeremiah in the bottom of a muddy pit. You might be making all kinds of deals and bargains with God. “*I will never waste another day*”. “*I will trust you with my life like never before, if you get me out of here*”. Both of those godly men essentially were being groomed to carry out God’s work that would go on without any public recognition or support. Joseph became a slave and was thrown into prison; but that became his pathway to his purpose. Jeremiah had few if any disciples. He was probably one of the most disliked prophets. He had to complete an assignment with people in his face hating him for what God was telling the people through him.

Read Psalm 130:5-8: The big picture is to become people who are waiting on God; not just waiting the weekend or the promotion. Unbelievers think that trusting is a risk. Those of us who have been rescued know differently. People who have been rescued know that God’s promises are a sure thing. It is not speculation or hope. This psalmist is basically camped out, waiting for God to orchestrate his rescue.

God wants to bless us with creature comforts; and at the same time he wants to wean us from them. That is one reason why the earth is cursed, and it brings confusion and discord. Falling in love with this life would lull us to sleep and be essentially godless.

Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Thessalonians 5:6-9)

If I am focused on God, I am not going to be stressing over my things. I have to ask myself if I am *activated* by the Holy Spirit. In other words, am I *in the hunt* for

Kingdom opportunities...or am I just doing my chores? That does not seem like much of a battleground for our mind at first glance; but it is an important question.