

PSALM 130: THE TINY GOSPEL
Hope Church in Petersfield, 12 May 2019

A psalm of hope. Hope you like it = wishful thinking, not the same as biblical hope

INTRODUCTION

One of the Songs of Ascent, 120-134. Pilgrim psalms, sung “going up” to Jerusalem for three great feasts

Helpful to us as we journey towards our heavenly home, “pilgrims in a strange land”

Structured into five groups of three, each triad include trouble/trust/triumph, moving from where we are now, through God’s intervention, to a place of victory.

Today we’re looking at Ps 130, a psalm of trust, sits in the middle of the triad on surviving difficulty.

About three-quarters of the way through the pilgrim’s journey from 120-134.

STRUCTURE

Samuel Cox (19thC nonconformist minister), edited The Expositor journal. Called Psalm 130 “*The tiny gospel, announcing the truths which people in every age need to know.*”

Why? Because it starts where we often find ourselves – in the depths

and ends up where we want to be – rescued and safe in God’s love

Relevant to us all, whether believers or not.

Structured as four pairs of verses, each of which has a three-part structure, charting a path from difficulty to hope

VERSES 1-2 – OUR PETITION

This is a good starting place when we’re in difficulty:

- a. Out of the **depths** – hit rock bottom, sunk without trace. Depression, discouragement, disillusionment, despair, difficulty
- b. **Cry out** to the Lord – don’t keep quiet, cry out, ask for help, tell him what’s going on. Repeats three times, “I cry out ... hear me ... pay attention to my voice.” Not giving up, persistence.
- c. Ask for **mercy** – what is it? (children’s song?) Mercy is when God does not give us what we deserve. So, what do we deserve to receive when we cry out to God for help?

VERSES 3-4 – OUR PROBLEM

We deserve God to ignore us and judge us, not to hear and answer our cry for help. Why?

- a. **Sin separates us** from God. If he recorded it all, we'd really be in trouble. But actually, the bible says he does record it – Revelation 20:12-13
 - *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done.*
- b. Fortunately for us, **God forgives** our sin – not because he has to but because he chooses to.
- c. So we can **stand and serve God** with confidence, based on his free and undeserved forgiveness.

This affects us all, see 1 John 1:8-10

- *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.*

Even long-term Christians – remember Psalm 130 is $\frac{3}{4}$ through the 120-134 pilgrimage. It seems that the closer we get to God, the more aware we become of our sin, and the more we recognise our need for forgiveness.

This is mercy and grace in action – not giving us the judgement that we deserve, but instead giving us the forgiveness that we don't deserve. This is the answer to our cry.

- Psalm 103:8-14. *The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*
- Ephesians 2:4-5. *But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).*

Now what? We've cried out to God from the depths, he's heard us, he's been merciful to us, he's forgiven us, so we can stand in his presence. Does this solve the problem of our difficulty? No!!

VERSES 5-6 – OUR POSITION

- a. Now we **wait!** No-one likes waiting. Credit economy "Have now, pay later". Instant gratification (Amazon one-click). Veruca Salt in Willie Wonka "I want it now!!"
But waiting is good for us:
 - Isaiah 40:30-31. *Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

- Lamentations 3:25-27. *The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.*
- Habakkuk 1:1 (How long O Lord?), 2:3 (It will come when it's ready)

God is never late. So how should we wait?

- Hoping in his word.** Not in feelings, or circumstances, or other people's advice or opinions. God keeps his promises, he never lies or tricks us, he can be trusted. "God says it; I believe it; that settles it!"
- So we go on waiting for him, not in desperation but in **expectation**. The night watchman knows morning will come, his shift will end, he can go home. We know we're waiting for a trustworthy reliable Father God who won't let us down. This is not wishful thinking, but faith-filled expectation and certainty. So where does all our waiting and hoping lead us? How does it help?

VERSES 7-8 – OUR PROSPECT

- We need to place our hope in God, "**put**" it there, active trust, faith, confidence, assurance. How can we be sure he won't let us down?
- He has **unfailing love** – he always wants the best for us, regardless of what we do or don't do. (*Yancy: Nothing you can do can make God love you more; nothing you can do can make God love you less.*)
And he has **full redemption**, not partial, but addressing the total implications of our sin. Past/present/future redemption, from penalty of sin/power of sin/ presence of sin.
How do we access God's loving redemption?
- He himself** will rescue us. We can't rescue ourselves, no-one else can, only God himself. Hint: This looks forward to Jesus, see Isaiah 53:3-6 and 1 Peter 2:24
 - *He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem. Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
 - *'He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed.'*

This describes our journey **from difficulty to hope – through relationship** with Father God.

CONCLUSION

Summary of structure: petition/problem/position/prospect

Note **God** is at the centre of each step. It's all about him, and our **relationship** with him.

Two levels of application:

- For Christians: when in difficulty, cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness, wait for God to act, and rely on his word, and hope in him himself to be your rescuer and redeemer
- Not yet a believer: remember this is called "the Tiny Gospel". This psalm could describe one step in your journey towards relationship with God. Recognise your current position and problem. Cry out to God to be merciful to you, and to do what he's promised for you. Put your trust in him himself to rescue you. You won't regret it!

PRAY