

Crying Out of the Depths
Psalm 130

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In a *Peanuts* cartoon, Charlie Brown is sitting at Lucy's psychiatric desk getting absolutely no help from Lucy. With a forlorn look on his face Charlie laments, "Where do I go to give up?"

One great value of the Psalms is that they put into words what we find difficult to express. Most scriptures speak to us. The Psalms speak for us. They enable us to articulate and bring before God our deepest feelings, our greatest fears, the lingering longings of our hearts, the troubled sorrows of our lives. So Jesus hanging on a cross cries out "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" (a direct quote from Psalm 22) something He surely learned in Sabbath School.

When I ask grieving families if they have particular scriptures they would like read at a loved one's funeral, nine times out of ten they will ask me to read the 23rd Psalm. When we "*walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*" we want to be reminded that God is with us.

Martin Luther, who often fought with devils while reforming the Church, considered Psalm 130 his favorite. John Wesley, on the day of his conversion, sat in St. Paul's Cathedral listening to a choir sing this Psalm (Psalm 130).

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord hear my cry."

When buried in the deepest sea, or down in a valley so low, when all you've put together begins to fall apart when suspended in mid-air with nothing solid to hold on to—people through the ages have cried out to the Lord for help. Eugene Peterson translates this verse this way: "Help God, the bottom has fallen out of my life." Is that not a common human cry?

Jonah cried out of the depths of REBELLION.

God called Jonah to go to Nineveh. He hopped a boat headed for Tarshish. God called Jonah east; Jonah went west. God called Jonah to preach; Jonah was content to sleep. When the sailors searched for someone responsible for the storm at sea, the lot fell on Jonah, the Hebrew on board who was running from the Lord.

Dumped in the deep waters, then swallowed by a great fish, Jonah cries to the Lord. "*In my great distress I called to the Lord and he answered me. From the depths of the grave I cried for help and you heard my cry.*" With currents swirling about him, seaweed wrapping around him, out of the depths of the sea, Jonah remembers the Lord. If your rebellion against God has gotten you in deep water today—remember Jonah—"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord,

hear my cry.”

Joseph cried out of the depths of REJECTION.

If you've gotten to church today stinging from a sibling squabble, reeling from some family fight, if your father expects too much from you and your brothers can't stand you — you might do well to remember Joseph who cried out to the Lord from the depths of an Egyptian prison.

I know we all have a little problem with this Biblical dreamer who wore a coat of many colors. Maybe he was arrogant, idealistic, too good to pimp himself to power with Potiphar's wife. But does that justify his brothers' rage or Mrs. Potiphar's lies, or the deep, dark dungeons of an Egyptian slave quarters? Out of the depths Joseph cries to the Lord and discovers *“What others meant for evil, God can still work for good.”* *“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”*

David cried out of the depths of BETRAYAL.

What more could you want than to be the king, a man after God's own heart? With unusual ability comes unrelenting responsibility. All he needed God had provided, but seeing the beautiful Bathsheba sunbathing on the patio made him think he needed what he wanted. Power corrupts; absolute power absolutely corrupts. How many people have started down the road of destiny only to get sidetracked on the lonely road of desire? We like to splatter their pictures on tabloids, have Congress pass judgments on them and produce TV documentaries about them.

Some people think David wrote Psalm 130. Most likely Hezekiah did. David did write Psalm 51. Here is what he said, *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. For I know my transgression and my sin is always before me.”* If you have ever betrayed your best, stooped to the desires of the flesh, stepped on the gas of your own moral energy only to find it severely lacking in the time of need, and are still conscientious enough to feel bad about it, you, like David, can cry out to the Lord. *“Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”*

Jeremiah cried out of the depths of DESPAIR.

We call him the weeping prophet. He said one time *“O, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears, I would weep day and night for the sins of my people.”* When thrown into a muddy cistern for his unpopular prophecies, Jeremiah curses the day he was born. Jeremiah knows gloom, despair, daily agony, but Jeremiah also knows the Lord. The word of the Lord is fire in his belly and passion in his soul. Down in that damp, muddy, old cistern Jeremiah affirms, *“The Lord is with me like a mighty warrior.”* *“Out of the depths I cry to you O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”*

OUT OF THE DEPTHS WE CRY TO YOU, O LORD. LORD, HEAR MY CRY.

That is what the Lord does. He hears our cry. The Psalmist found some

particular ways that the Lord heard his cry.

With the Lord there is FORGIVENESS (Psalm 130:3–4).

Tracy Bailey stood before the judge with his head held high as the community of Goshen, Indiana, bowed their heads in disbelief. This captain of the wrestling team, member of the student council, good student, from a church-going family, had just been found guilty of vandalizing his school causing thousands of dollars in useless damage. For his actions, he got five years in a juvenile offender facility.

Tracy started his time determined not to bend an inch, to be tough, to hold his head up high; then one day in solitary confinement, Tracy took a long look at himself in a mirror. The sight of himself shocked Tracy. Tears began to flow. He began to pray. One of the guards prayed with him. Someone gave Tracy a Bible. He joined a prison Bible Study Fellowship.

Tracy was released from prison early for good behavior. He went to work and paid off his debts. He made restitution to the school and then went to college. He became a math and science teacher and in April of 1993, the President of the United States honored Tracy with the National Teacher of the Year Award. *“If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who would stand a chance? But with you there is forgiveness.” “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”*

With the Lord, there is HOPE (Psalm 130: 5–6).

Evidently this Psalmist had pulled some time as a night watchman. He knew what it was to work the lonely, tiring, scary, shadows of the evening. He knew its danger; he knew its challenge; he knew you could not rush the dawn. You can only wait for the sunrise.

*I wait for God, and on his work, my hope relies.
My soul still waits, until the lights arise.
I look for him to drive away my night,
Yea, more than watchmen wait for morning light.*

I know, some of you have been waiting a long time for a child to come home, a marriage to be better, a break to come at work, a healing to happen. I just want to say: keep hope alive. In God’s time, He makes all things beautiful in His time. *“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”*

With the Lord there is UNFAILING LOVE (Psalm 130:7). Henri Nouwen puts it this way. “The Lord kneels before me holding my naked feet in His hands and looking up at me with a smile. The intimacy is too great for me. So I say, ‘Lord, you don’t really know me, my dark feelings, my pride, my lust, my greed. I may speak the right words, but my heart is so far from you. I am not good enough to belong to you. You must have someone else in mind.’ Then with utter tenderness He says, *‘I want you to be with me. I want you to have a full share of my life. I want you to belong to me as much as I belong to my Father. I want to wash you*

completely clean so that you and I can be one and so that you can do to others what I have done to you.’ - Slowly I let go of my fears, distrust, doubts and anguish in time to simply let you wash me clean and love me with a love that has no bounds.” “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”

With the Lord there is FULL REDEMPTION (Psalm 130: 7–8)

To be redeemed is to be regained, reclaimed, recouped, retrieved. To be redeemed is to be bought back, cashed in. My mother used to collect S&H Green Stamps at the grocery store. I couldn’t wait for her to redeem them. It often meant some special gift for me. We redeem our air miles, our coupons, our warranties for something of value; then I remember that I have been redeemed. Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am. With God there is full redemption. The prodigal did not come home a slave. He came home a son. Let the celebration begin. *“Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my cry.”*

A grand master chess champion stood staring one day into a painting of a chess match between the devil and an out-witted young man. The young man appears defeated. The devil appears to be making his final move to checkmate. As the grand master studies the painting he suddenly turns to the curator and says, “Don’t let the kid give up. He still has another move.”

When you feel out in the depths, you still have another move. The ears of the Lord are attentive to our cries for help.

*There is a balm in Gilead, that heals the sin-sick soul.
There is a balm in Gilead, that makes the wounded whole.*

Amen.

