

Friday, May 15, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PSALM 130 (NIV)

A SONG OF ASCENTS.

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;

² Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.

³ If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.

⁶ I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

⁷ Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.

⁸ He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

— PART 2 —

*I found that when a passage of Scripture has been very familiar to me for a long time — such as this passage! — if I will simply **slow down** . . . take my time . . . and read thoughtfully and reflectively, it can become alive to me in new and fresh ways.*

PSALM 130 (NIV)

³ If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

The Psalmist cries out to the Lord for mercy from “out of the depths.” But v. 3 reveals that he is not simply drowning in life’s difficulties in general, but because of the enormity of his sins. So the verse lays out a terrifying question: **WHAT IF the Lord maintained and retained a permanent record of our sins?** None of us would be left standing after the judgment that would fall on us! Including the Psalmist himself. Including me. (And including you, I would guess, as well?) After all:

ROMANS 3:23 (NLT)

...**EVERYONE** has sinned;
we **ALL fall short of God’s glorious standard.**

I love how Eugene Peterson paraphrased this last line: *we’ve “proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us”* (THE MESSAGE)!

I find that true. Heartbreakingly true! How about you?

“The idea is that if the LORD kept a meticulous record of iniquities, or marked the sins themselves and did not remove them, no one could hope to **escape** judgment. . . . no one could **survive** the judgment where the charges against them, their sins, would be enumerated.”

ALLEN P. ROSS, *A Commentary on the Psalms, 90-150* [Kregel Exegetical Library]

James Houston resonates with this verse:

“Permit me, if you will, to interrupt these...reflections with my own. **Being “in the depths as a guilty sinner” is not popular thinking today:** “sin” has lost its meaning in secularism, and the role of the Holy Spirit has been misunderstood, as evidenced in the prevailing rivalry between the human spirit and the third person of the Trinity. Yet the emotional realm of “the depths of despair” remains overpopulated territory today with the global pandemic of human depression being viewed by the medical profession as clinically as serious as cancer and heart attacks. Yet to assume that guilt vanishes with medication and to dismiss religion is rather like treating a migraine by cutting off one’s head. **This psalm powerfully compels us all to reexamine our basic beliefs about God and sin. It is not about our social circumstances; it is about our primary existence as guilty sinners before the holy God.**”

BRUCE K. WALTKE, JAMES M. HOUSTON, & ERIKA MOORE, *The Psalms as Christian Lament: A Historical Commentary*

We are indeed “in deep.” Crying “out from the depths” of our sins! We are “**guilty sinners before the holy God.**”

And yet. The Psalmist had said “**IF**” the Lord retains a permanent record of our sins, we’re sunk. And that’s true. But **HE DOESN’T!** (*Verse 4 will reveal that!*) We know this because verse 3 is a “**WHAT IF**” — a **conditional** statement. Allen Ross clarifies that “**It is a condition that is contrary to fact, but raised as a possibility for the sake of the clear affirmation that there IS forgiveness!**”

Check back here tomorrow for some **overwhelming evidence of the Lord’s forgiveness** that is available for me . . . and for you!

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But before we do that, would you please take a moment, and think of yourself, as I will be thinking of myself, standing in God’s presence? Aware of the sins that we have lived out this very day, or week, or month, or year. We are standing in our holy God’s presence, and we know we are guilty. **We have “proved that we are utterly incapable of living the glorious lives God wills for us!”**

And yet . . . he does NOT keep a permanent record of our sins! Amen. Hallelujah!

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*Forgiving Father, at times we feel like we are **drowning** in our sins! As Bruce Waltke puts it, “The chaotic depths of guilt, like a tsunami wave, overwhelm” us. So we cry out for mercy. We cry out for your rescue. We cry out for forgiveness. And we praise you that you hear us . . . and that you keep NO record of our sins!*

Pastor Doug