

have strong overtones of worship. The priests of the temple were to “serve” (*abad*) the LORD and “keep, watch, or pay attention to” (*shamar*) the commandments. The words imply that Adam (and all mankind) are not just to till and cultivate the garden, but to “worship and serve” and “obey” the LORD in all of life.

Apply: The call to be watchful is the admonition to be careful and diligent in respect to religious and spiritual responsibilities. From Abraham on God’s faithful were to command their children to keep the way of the LORD. The Pentateuch repeats again and again the admonition to keep (pay careful attention to) the decrees and commandments of the LORD. While we are not saved by keeping any of the commandments, we are saved in order to “worship and serve” and “obey” the LORD in all of our redeemed and renewed life. It was the original calling of Adam, it is the calling of all who are called to renewed life in the second Adam, Christ Jesus.

Pray: Pray that the Holy Spirit would renew and transform your walk this week, teaching you to “watch and keep” God’s word in all you do and say.

Saturday 9/1

Read: Psalm 130:7-8

Examine: The psalm changes now from the individual crying from the depths to a corporate call for all Israel. The call is for Israel to find hope in the steadfast and unflinching love of their covenant God. The LORD has the authority and power to show steadfast love in the work of redemption and will consummate his sovereignty by redeeming Israel from all its iniquities. How and when that full and final redemption will come, the Old Testament song does not say. But it is in the hope of it that every pilgrimage “from the depths” is made.

Apply: Psalm 25:22 prays for the LORD “to redeem Israel from all its troubles,” a prayer that in its similarity with Psalm 130 reminds us that redemption includes liberation not only from guilt but also from the whole imprisoning network of sin’s effects on life, the “chaos” of the depths.” The New Testament also teaches us that all of creation is groaning for the redemption that will come in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:22), a work that has been finished and accomplished on the cross, and now awaits the sure hope of its full completion at Christ’s second coming. For all who cry “from the depths,” let them “wait on the LORD” with sure hope and confidence, and “watch” and “keep” in faithful service the commandments of our savior God until that time arrives.

Pray: Use Psalm 130 as a prayer, praying God’s word back to Him, as a song of preparation as we go “from the depths” of this week’s turmoil “up to” Mt. Zion in preparation to worship in His presence.

Psalm 130
NIV

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. If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.



Taking Gathered Worship Home

Family and Individual Devotions

Meditations in the Psalms

Week of August 26, 2007

Psalm 130 (sometimes referred to in Church liturgies as *De Profundis* from the opening words of the Latin translation) is part of the collection of psalms known as the “psalms of ascent” (120-134). These were hymns sung by pilgrims on their way “up” to Mt. Zion for worship. In the history of the Church it became one of the seven penitential psalms (along with 6, 32, 38, 51, 102 and 143) that were used in the services and disciplines of repentance. Because this psalm teaches the basic truths of the gospel message, Luther called it, “a proper master and doctor of Scripture.” John Wesley had heard the psalm sung on the afternoon before his transforming experience at Aldersgate. The message of the psalm is at the heart of the gospel message: the human predicament enslaved to the guilt and power of sin, and its total dependence on divine grace. As this psalm shows, repentance is the opening movement toward coming into the presence of the LORD.

Sunday 8/26

Read: Psalm 130:1-2

Examine: The psalmist cries out to his covenantal God from “the depths.” This is a metaphor and abbreviation for “the depths of the sea” (Cf. Isa 51:10 and Ezek 27:34). The image provoked is the chaos of the sea, of drowning in distress, of being overwhelmed and sucked down by the bottomless waters of troubles. It is strongly connected to the presence of sin, both in the individual and in the corporate life of the Church. It is not just guilt, but the flood of wrong and its consequences from which there is no escape apart from a liberating, rescuing redemption.

Apply: From where should the King of the Universe be addressed and worshipped? One might think it should be from a posture of obedience, or at least from a situation of prosperity and success. But this psalm is a miserable cry of nobody from nowhere, and it strikes one of the most poignant evangelical notes in all the psalms: the cries from the depth of distress and repentance are the voices to which God is peculiarly attuned. The cry of the beggar penetrates the veil of heaven!

Pray: How often do we begin our prayers by repenting of our sins and failures? Yet this is the entrance point to the presence of God. Begin your prayers this week with a humble, honest, soul-

searching acknowledgment of sinfulness.

Monday 8/27

Read: Psalm 130:3-4

Examine: In these verses, the psalmist acknowledges he is unqualified to approach the throne. Verse 3 is a rhetorical question; no one is qualified to approach the throne. If there were no forgiveness in God, even our faith would be of no avail, no one could stand. The rhetorical answer reflects the universal condemnation of Romans 3:23. “But” (one of the greatest words in Scripture) the truth that this song knows and teaches is that with God there is “the forgiveness” (there is a definite article in the Hebrew). This is the center of the entire prayer. It is the ground for such a bold prayer. There is in our God the readiness and capacity to cancel the iniquity and to begin again.

Apply: The presence of the definite article (“the” forgiveness) implies that the authority to forgive and the disposition to forgive belong solely to the LORD. Sin is essentially a matter of relation to the LORD (Psa 51:4) who alone in His sovereign deity has the right to forgive, choosing to deal with sinners by grace (Exod 33:19; Mark 2:1-12). How scandalous it was for the man Jesus of Nazareth to claim this prerogative for himself (Mark 2:7-10). It was a claim to deity, to be equal with YHWH! Yet it is through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection that forgiveness comes to a sinful world.

Pray: A confessing prayer is also a prayer that comes in confidence to the One who can and will provide forgiveness. As you enter into God’s presence in prayer, confidently claim that forgiveness that was won for you by Christ on the cross.

Tuesday 8/28

Read: Psalm 130:3-4

Examine: At the end of verse 4 the psalmist directs us to the true fruit of forgiveness. It is sometimes preached that forgiveness serves to open our lives up to true joy and freedom, liberating us from the shackles of guilt. But this is not so. Forgiveness is instrumental to the real purpose: “That thou mayest be feared.” (KJV) One might have expected the reverse: that fearing the LORD would be a ground for forgiveness. But it goes the other way around. The gift goes before the obedience. The result is that the heard beggar fears the king. As the relationship is transformed, so the depths are transformed as well.

Apply: Dependence on the LORD’s disposition to forgive was learned from God’s way with Israel, especially in the exilic experience. For New Testament Christians, we see this most clearly in Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection on our behalf. The consequence of this truth for those who believe it is that they “fear the LORD.” They can live life as “God-fearers,” that is, as people who take the authority and disposition of the LORD as the greatest reality of all and base their living on God’s word without reservation.

Pray: Pray that your life this week would reflect the “fear of the LORD” in all your actions and decisions, a fear that comes from the gratitude and assurance of forgiveness.

Wednesday 8/29

Read: Exodus 20:20

Examine: What does it mean to “fear” the LORD? The answer may range from reverential awe to utter terror. It probably comprehends all of these. When you look at Exodus 20:20 there is a remarkable play on the word “fear.” “Do not fear...that you may fear.” Do not live under the threat of God in order that you may embrace God for the sake of utter obedience. The fear intended here is to begin anew, a life freshly oriented, finding in obedience new freedom and life.

Apply: In Mark 4:35-41 the disciples were “afraid” of the terrible power of the storm and sea, the chaos of “the depths.” But when Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples were “very much afraid” (they were “afraid afraid” in the Greek). It’s one thing to be in the presence of a terrible storm, another to be in the presence of the one who controls the storm. The one we “fear” is the one who not only controls the universe, but loved us to the point of death. To “fear” such a one is to put all things in perspective; there is no longer any more “fear” of sin, death, or suffering! Only loving, faithful obedience.

Pray: Lay your concerns, troubles, and sufferings before the LORD in prayer, knowing that we no longer need to fear anything in this world when our fear is in the LORD God who made and sustains all, and works everything for good for those who fear and love Him.

Thursday 8/30

Read: Psalm 130:5-6

Examine: Psalm 130 also teaches us what it means to “fear” the LORD. In verses 5-6 we learn that fear leads to hope. The terms wait and hope used in these verses are roughly synonyms in the Hebrew (Cf. Isa 51:5). The waiting-hoping is like a watchman at night, waiting early and expectantly for the relief that comes with daybreak. Fear of the LORD means to have confidence that things as they are (in the depths) are not as they will be. Life will be transformed. Forgiveness leads to liberation from life as it is presently perceived.

Apply: Faith is an activity that must and does reckon with time, a stance of enduring the present in anticipation of vindication in the future. “waiting for the LORD” is the Christian position of faith during times of trouble when a prophetic word of salvation or a divine promise of steadfast love has been given. It is trust that finds strength and courage from the certainty of what is yet to be (this is the true Biblical meaning of “to hope”). It finds voice in prayer that will not be discouraged.

Pray: Pray for the trust and assurance that comes when we patiently wait and hope in times of distress and trouble. Pray for the Christian church in the world as it “waits” for the vindication and victory that will come when Christ returns.

Friday 8/31

Read: Psalm 130:5-6; Gen 2:15

Examine: The word “watch” (*shamar*) that is used of the “watchman” is the same word that is used in Gen 2:15 that is usually translated “to keep.” Gen 2:15 is usually referred to as the “cultural mandate” as Adam is instructed “to work” (*abad*) and “to keep” (*shamar*) the garden. Both these words