

PSALM 130

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 130

A Song of degrees.

This psalm is by some thought to have been written by David either when persecuted by Saul, and in great distress, and fearful he should perish by him; or else when in great distress of mind because of sin, after the affair of Bathsheba; and it is reckoned therefore among the penitential psalms. Though others think it was written by Ezra, or some other godly person in the captivity; and Aben Ezra and R. Obadiah interpret it of Israel in captivity. The Syriac inscription is,

“one of the psalms of ascension: it is said concerning Nehemiah the priest (or rather the prince or governor, since Nehemiah was no priest); and it intimates in it the prayer of the martyrs.”

It may be applied to any person in distress, outward or inward; applying to God for help and deliverance, for pardoning grace and mercy; encouraging himself and others to hope for it.

Ver. 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.*] Out of deep waters, out of the depths of the sea; not literally, as Jonah, who really was there, and from thence cried unto the Lord, (Jon 2:2-6); but figuratively; meaning that he had been in the depths of sin, or brought into a low estate by it, as all men are: they are brought into debt by it, and so to a prison, the prison of the law, to be under its sentence of curse and condemnation; to a ditch, a horrible pit, a pit wherein is no water, and out of which men cannot extricate themselves; to a dunghill, to the most extrem poverty and beggary; to a dungeon, a state of thralldom, bondage, and captivity; into an hopeless and helpless condition. The depths the psalmist was now in were a deep sense of sin, under which he lay, and which brought him low; as every man is low in his own eyes, when he has a thorough sense of sin; then he sees himself unworthy of any favour from God, deserving of his wrath and displeasure; as a polluted guilty creature, loathsome and abominable; as wretched and undone in himself; as the chief of sinners, more brutish than any man, and as a beast before the Lord: but then, though the psalmist was

in the depths of distress for sin, yet not in the depths of despair; he cried to God, he hoped in him, and believed there was pardon with him: or he might be in the depths of afflictions; which are sometimes, because of the greatness of them, compared to deep waters; to the deep waters of the sea, which threaten to overflow and overwhelm, but shall not; (see ¹⁹⁴⁷Psalm 42:7 69:1,2 88:6 ²³⁴¹Isaiah 43:2); and in such circumstances the psalmist cried to God for help and deliverance; not to man, whose help is vain; but to God, who is able to save, and is a present help in time of need.

Theodoret understands this of the psalmist's crying to God from the bottom of his heart, in the sincerity of his soul; and so his cry is opposed to feigned and hypocritical prayers.

Ver. 2. *Lord, hear my voice*, etc.] His prayer, which was vocal: God is a God hearing prayer; sometimes his people think he does not hear them; but he always does, and in his own time answers; for to hear prayer with him is to answer it; which he does likewise in his own way as well as time; and not always in the way and at the time his people would have him;

let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications; his prayers put up in an humble suppliant manner, for grace and mercy; not pleading merit and righteousness: these he desires God would hearken to and hear, listen unto, bow and incline his ears, as he is sometimes said to do; which is a wonderful instance of his condescension.

Ver. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities*, etc.] Or “observe”^{f1778} them. Not but that God does observe the sins of men: he sees all the evil actions of bad men done in the dark, which cannot hide them from him; and all the iniquities of good men, so as to correct and chastise for them, but not with his eye of vindictive justice. Or “keep”^{f1779} them; should he keep a watchful eye over them, make strict inspection into them, enter into a critical examination of them, and of all their aggravated circumstances; should he keep them in mind and memory, retain them in the book of his remembrance; should he lay them up, and keep them sealed among his stores, in order to be brought to light, and brought out as charges another day, and to the condemnation of men; should he set them before him in the light of his countenance, and not cast them behind his back and into the depths of the sea; should he visit for them in a way of wrath, or enter into judgment on account of them, with men in their own persons; demanding satisfaction for them at their own hands, without any regard to the sacrifice and satisfaction of his Son; all a man's righteousness, repentance,

humiliation and tears, would stand him in no stead, would not answer for him, or atone for his sins; still his iniquities would remain marked before God; the consequence of which would be eternal damnation, (^{<2412>}Jeremiah 2:22);

O Lord, who shall stand? Not one; since all are sinners. The Arabic version adds, “before thee”; in his presence; in the house and courts of God, there to minister before him; to pray and praise, to preach and hear: or at his bar hereafter, with any boldness and confidence; so as to litigate the point with him in his court of judicature, before angels and men, and so as to carry the cause; the wicked shall not stand in judgment, (^{<3005>}Psalm 1:5). Or who can stand before his vindictive justice, or bear his wrath and vengeance? No one can. (see Na 1:6) (^{<3082>}Malachi 3:2 ^{<6067>}Revelation 6:17).

Ver. 4. *But [there is] forgiveness with thee,* etc.] And with God only; not with angels, nor any of the sons of men; and which flows from his grace and mercy, through the blood of his Son. It appears to be with him by his promise of it in covenant; by appointing his Son to shed his blood for it, and exalting him as a Saviour to give it; by proclaiming it in the Gospel; and by the numerous instances of it, both under the Old and under the New Testament. Or, there is “a propitiation with thee”; as the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions render it: God had found out Christ to be the propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and the ransom of his people; and set him forth in his purposes and decrees for that end; and which was made known by the sacrifices of the law, typical of it; and in the fulness of time he sent him to be the propitiation for it, and he is become so; and has made reconciliation for sin, and reconciled his people to God by the sufferings of death; and reconciled all the divine perfections of justice and holiness, grace and mercy, together, in the salvation of men; and is now an advocate the Father for them, pleading the propitiatory sacrifice of himself before him;

that thou mayest be feared; were it not for pardon, and the hope of it, men would be desperate; and, having no hope, would resolve upon taking their swing of sin, and be entirely negligent of the worship and service of God: was there no forgiveness of sin, there would be no more fear of God among men than there is among devils, for whom there is no forgiveness; there might be dread and trembling, as among them, but no godly fear: yea, if God was strictly to mark iniquity, and not pardon it, there would be none to fear him, all must be condemned and cut off by him; but, in order to

secure and preserve his fear among men, he has taken the step he has to pardon sin through the propitiatory sacrifice of his Son; and a discovery, and an application of his grace, teaches men to fear to offend him; influences them to serve him acceptably with reverence and godly fear, and engages them to fear him and his goodness, and him for his goodness's sake, (^{<S111>}Titus 2:11,12 ^{<S112>}Hebrews 12:8) (^{<S113>}Hosea 3:5).

Ver. 5. *I wait for the Lord*, etc.] For his gracious presence and the light of his countenance, being in darkness, as well as in the deep; for his salvation and deliverance out of the depths of distress; for an answer of prayer, having cried unto him for application of pardoning grace he had some view and hopes of; and for the performance of promises the Lord had made to him; and for eternal glory and happiness: all which are to be patiently and quietly waited for, God having his set time to do them; and may be confidently expected, since he is gracious and merciful, wise and powerful, faithful and immutable. David might also be waiting for the coming of Christ, as all the Old Testament saints did; through whom all the above are enjoyed;

my soul doth wait; which shows that this was not mere bodily service or waiting upon God and for him in an external way; but expresses the intenseness of his mind, the earnest desires of his heart after God, his affection for him, and the exercise of all other graces on him; his whole soul, and all the powers of it, were engaged in this work;

and in his word do I hope: both in his essential Word the Messiah, who was the Hope of Israel as well as the Saviour of them; the object, ground, and foundation of hope, of all blessings, of grace and of glory: and in his word of promise concerning the coming of Christ, and salvation by him; concerning the pardon of sin through him, and eternal life by him; as well as in many other special and particular promises made to David, concerning himself, his family, and his kingdom. Arama and Kimchi interpret it of the promise of deliverance from captivity made to the Jews.

Ver. 6. *My soul [waiteth] for the Lord*, etc.] This is repeated for the confirmation of it, and to show the vehement and constant disposition of his mind towards the Lord; as well as for the sake of what follows:

more than they that watch for the morning: [I say, more than] they that watch for the morning; or, “more than the morning watchers, that watch for or until the morning”^{f1780}; than watchmen of cities, or the keepers of the

wails, as Aben Ezra; those who are upon the last morning watch, and are looking out for the morning light; that they may go off from duty, and lie down and sleep: or than those that sit up with sick persons; who, being solitary and melancholy, as well as want sleep, long for the morning, that they may have some refreshment: or rather than the priests and Levites that watched in the temple, that waited for the morning, that they might be relieved by others; or else than those of that function, who were very diligent to observe the break of day, that they might enter upon their morning sacrifices; of which are many instances in the Misnah^{f1781}. So the Targum,

“more than they that observe the morning watches, which they observe to offer up the morning sacrifice:”

and Kimchi’s paraphrase is,

“who rise in the morning watches to pray.”

The coming of Christ is said to be as the morning; and the light of God’s countenance is comparable to the morning light; the discoveries of pardoning grace are through the bright shining of the sun of righteousness, and is the healing that is in his wings; and salvation and deliverance from any distress Is light that breaks forth as the morning: all and each of these are more desirable, and more to be waited for, than the natural light of the morning; (see ^{<120>}2 Samuel 23:4) (^{<200>}Hosea 6:3 ^{<300>}Psalms 30:4 ^{<301>}Malachi 4:2 ^{<200>}Isaiah 58:8).

Ver. 7. *Let Israel hope in the Lord*, etc.] The psalmist having himself hope in the Lord and in his word, through a view of forgiveness with him, exhorts and encourages others to do so likewise, even every Israelite indeed; and such may comfortably hope in him for salvation, which was designed, contrived, promised, and now wrought out for sinners, the chief of sinners, and to be had freely; and the Gospel declaration is, that whosoever believes in Christ shall be saved; as well as for the remission of sin, which God has promised in covenant; proclaimed in Christ, whom he has sent to obtain it, and exalted to give it; and has declared in the Gospel that whoever believes in him shall have it; and also for eternal life and happiness, which is the gift of God through Christ; is in the hands of Christ, and of which the Spirit of God is the earnest and pledge. Arguments encouraging hope follow:

for with the Lord [there is] mercy; which is natural and essential to him; as displayed, is either general, and over all his works, and towards all his creatures; or special, only shown to whom he will: this flows through Christ, and is very large and abundant; and appears in various instances, in the covenant, in the mission of Christ, and redemption by him; in regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, and in salvation; as well as it is bestowed on innumerable objects: and this nerves much to encourage hope, since there is plenty of it, and God is plenteous in it; and it is kept for many, for thousands, and even the vilest of sinners, share in it; God has set up a throne of grace and mercy for men to apply to, and he delights in showing mercy, and in those that hope in it: or, there is “grace”^{f1782} with him; an abundance of it in his heart; a fulness of it in his son; and large aboundings of it through Christ, in conversion, pardon, and other things;

and with him [is] plenteous redemption; the purpose of it was in him; the scheme of it was drawn by him; the covenant of it was made with Christ; the promise of it was published, and now the thing itself is done, and is with Christ the author of it: and this is “plenteous”, if we consider the number of persons redeemed from among men, being such as no man can number; what of them is redeemed, even all of them, their souls and bodies; what they are redeemed from, from all sin, the law, its curse and condemnation, from death and hell, from Satan and all enemies; the several blessings included in it, or connected with it, pardon of sin, justification of persons, adoption, sanctification, and eternal life; the great price paid for it, the blood, the life of Christ, yea, himself: and the large display of love, grace, and mercy, wisdom, power, justice, and holiness, made in it. Kimchi interprets this of redemption from Egypt, Babylon, etc.

Ver. 8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*] The Lord shall do it; in whom Israel is encouraged to hope; with whom grace and redemption were; or who was appointed to be the Redeemer. Redemption was then future, when these words were said, but certain, by the promise of God and agreement of Christ; and would be of the whole Israel, or elect of God; and that from “all” their iniquities, original and actual; sins, secret and open, of heart, lip, and life: and which is no small encouragement for Israel to hope in the Lord, for the sake of which this is added; as well as for the further illustration of the nature of redemption by Christ; which is complete, and now obtained, and is an eternal one.