

Lent 5 – Psalm 130 – a Personal Plea for Forgiveness:-

This Psalm is one of a series of fifteen (numbers 120 to 134) known as “A Song of Ascents”. They were traditionally used by Jewish pilgrims on their way up to Jerusalem for one of the great feasts. A good title for them would be “Pilgrim Songs”. Psalm 130 is a cry from the heart of a pilgrim troubled and in despair. The closing plea for others is a recognition that the psalmist’s troubles and despair are shared by the nation. This makes the psalm appropriate for our personal use and as a prayer for our society, government and nation in this time of uncertainty.

Verses 1 and 2 – The Cry of the Penitent:- “*Out of the depths . . .*” These verses, as the rest of the psalm are in the present tense. “*I cry to you O Lord!*” - There are times when it seems as though heaven is sealed up. As though we are praying into a void and no-one hears us, no- one responds! A bit like Jonah “*The waters closed in over me, the deep was round about me*”. Read his prayer in the Book of Jonah, chapter 2, verses 1 – 9. Remember “*Deliverance belongs to the Lord!*”.

Verses 3 and 4 – The Assurance of Forgiveness:- Note that the universality of sin is forcefully presented in the statement that no-one could be justified if God marked down every sin, rather than blotting sins out. The only hope comes in God’s forgiveness, which in turn arouses the feeling of awe in the forgiven sinner.

Remember that this, and other similar statements are looking forward to the supreme sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins made by our Lord Jesus Christ. Read 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 10 – 12.

Verses 5 and 6 – Expectancy in Hope:- “*I wait for the Lord . . . and in his word do I hope*”. The sense of expectancy is strong. Waiting and watching is repeated for emphasis. Just like the watchmen on the city walls look for and long for the coming of the morning and their relief from the long night of waiting. See also the Gospel of Mark chapter 13, verses 32 – 37.

So we too wait and long for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! (Revelation chapter 22, verse 20)

Verses 7 and 8 – The Application to Israel:- “*O Israel, hope in the Lord!*”. The psalmist’s thoughts turn to others who need to share his enthusiastic confidence. The words “*steadfast love*” are a translation of the Hebrew word “*hesed*” one of the most significant words in the Old Testament scriptures. The translation of this word with reference to the character of the Lord God (“*Yahweh*”) is difficult if not impossible in just one English word or phrase. The word “*hesed*” includes the concept of ‘mercy’, ‘kindness’ and ‘faithfulness’ as well as ‘steadfast love’. The key text is Exodus chapter 34, verses 4 – 7.

In view of the loving kindness and abundant redemption of the Lord the psalmist can assert that God “*will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*”

*This, this is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend,
Whose love is as great as His power;
And knows neither measure nor end.*

*’Tis Jesus the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past.
And trust Him for all that’s to come.*

Joseph Hart 1712 - 1768