

PSALM 130

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up with the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have sometimes been made use of by penitents, upon their admission into the church; and, in singing it, we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresses,

I. His desire towards God (v. 1, 2).

II. His repentance before God (v. 3, 4).

III. His attendance upon God (v. 5, 6).

IV. His expectations from God (v. 7, 8). And, as in water face answers to face, so does the heart of one humble penitent to another.

PSALM 130:1-4

GOD'S REGARD TO HIS CHURCH

A song of degrees.

In these verses we are taught,

I. Whatever condition we are in, though ever so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, v. 1. The best men may sometimes be in *the depths*, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do, in the depths of distress and almost in the depths of despair, the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But, in the greatest depths, it is our privilege that we may cry unto God and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in in this world, Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower and to recover us out of the *horrible pit and miry clay*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 40:1, 2.

II. While we continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for (v. 2): *Lord, hear my voice, my complaint and prayer, and let thy ears be attentive to the voice both of my afflictions and of my supplications.*

III. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences (v. 3): *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord! who shall stand?* His calling God *Lord* twice, in so few words, *Jah* and *Adonai*, is very emphatic, and intimates a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here,

1. To acknowledge our iniquities, that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead Not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities and is liable to be animadverted upon.

2. To own the power and justice of God, which are such that, if he were extreme to mark what we do amiss, there would be no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man to ground a condemnation upon; and, if he proceed against us, we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he make remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great, greatly aggravated and very provoking; and then, if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour and shut us up under his wrath; and what could we do to help ourselves? We could not make our escape, nor resist nor bear up under his avenging hand.

3. Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we should be undone if he were to mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us. *It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.*

IV. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, v. 4. Here is,

1. God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner: *But there is forgiveness with thee.* It is our unspeakable comfort, in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him, for that is what we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin; he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, ⁽¹²⁴⁶⁾Exodus 34:6, 7. He

has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him implacable, but easy to be entreated, and swift to show mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. *There is a propitiation with thee*, so some read it. Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness.

2. Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it: “*There is forgiveness with thee*, not that thou mayest be made bold with and presumed upon, but *that thou mayest be feared* — in general, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men, who, being sinners, could have no dealings with God, if he were not a Master that could pass by a great many faults.” But this encourages us to come into his service that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanour; no, nor for any, if we truly repent. This does in a special manner invite those who have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God, that he is gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance, ^{<BIB>}Joel 2:13; ^{<BIB>}Matthew 3:2. And, particularly, we are to have a holy awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy (^{<BIB>}Hosea 3:5, *They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness*); and *then* we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God when we make it the object of our holy fear.

^{<BIB>}PSALM 130:5-8

HUMBLE CONFIDENCE

Here,

I. The psalmist engages himself to trust in God and to wait for him, v. 5, 6. Observe,

1. His dependence upon God, expressed in a climax, it being a a song of degrees, or ascents: “*I wait for the Lord*; from him I expect relief and comfort, believing it will come, longing till it does come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. *My soul doth wait*; I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is *for the Lord* that *my soul waits*, for the gifts of his grace and the operations of his power.”

2. The ground of that dependence: *In his word do I hope*. We must hope for that only which he has promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; we must hope for it because he has promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit.

3. The degree of that dependence — “*more than those that watch for the morning, who are,*

(1.) Well-assured that the morning will come; and so am I that God will return in mercy to me, according to his promise; for God's covenant is more firm than the ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting.”

(2.) Very desirous that it would come. Sentinels that keep guard upon the walls, those that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day wish to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly does this good man long for the tokens of God's favour and the visits of his grace, and more readily will he be aware of his first appearances than they are of day. Dr. Hammond reads it thus, *My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning*, and gives this sense of it, “To thee I daily betake myself, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my very soul, before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice.”

II. He encourages all the people of God in like manner to depend upon him and trust in him: *Let Israel hope in the Lord and wait for him*; not only the body of the people, but every good man, who *surnames himself by the name of Israel*, ²³⁴⁵ Isaiah 44:5. Let all that devote themselves to God cheerfully stay themselves upon him (v. 7, 8), for two reasons: —

1. Because the light of nature discovers to us that *there is mercy with him*, that the God of Israel is a merciful God and *the Father of mercies*. *Mercy is with him*; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels.

2. Because the light of the gospel discovers to us that *there is redemption with him*, contrived by him, and to be wrought out *in the fulness of time*; it was in the beginning hidden in God. See here,

(1.) The nature of this redemption; it is redemption from sin, from all sin, and therefore can be no other than that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the author of; for it is he *that saves his people from their*

sins (^{<402>}Matthew 1:21), that *redeems them from all iniquity* (^{<3024>}Titus 2:14), and *turns away ungodliness from Jacob*, ^{<5125>}Romans 11:26. It is he that redeems us both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin.

(2.) The riches of this redemption; it is *plenteous redemption*; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, says the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils, and therefore is a plenteous redemption.

(3.) The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong: *He shall redeem Israel*, Israel according to the spirit, all those who are in covenant with God, as Israel was, and who are *Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile*.