When You Cannot Stand

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0:00] In Psalm 130, let me read it out loud for us, eight verses.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy.
If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.
[1:18] This is God's holy and authoritative word. We bring a lot of hardship upon ourselves through our own sins in life, and our sexual immorality, selfish ambition, dissensions, drunkenness, envy, fits of rage.

They all leave behind, you know, spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational wreckage. And sometimes we feel like we're drowning in this sea of trouble that we have created for ourselves. And we feel overwhelmed in over our heads. And that's the condition of the psalmist in Psalm 130. But he tells us in such times that we should cry to the Lord and wait on the Lord, for with him there is sure forgiveness and redemption.
And so in the first four verses, he talks about how we should cry to the Lord. And then in the second half, verses 5 to 8, he talks about how we should wait on the Lord. So let's first look at the first four verses.
The psalmist describes his condition in verse 1 as being in the depths. He says in verse 1, Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. The depths is an often used biblical image.
[2:41] It's a picture of deep, turbulent waters. Imagine someone, you know, drowning in the water, being tossed out in sea, head low, you know, just tilted back, mouth open.

Just kind of eyes glazed over, hollow. And it's a picture of imminent death. Someone just being overwhelmed in over their heads.
That's the kind of thing the psalmist is talking about, the depths. He's about to be engulfed and consumed by the water. And he cries out to the Lord.
And the Lord is in all caps in verse 1, which means it stands for the proper name of God, which Jewish scribes omitted and substituted the word Lord in, out of their reverence for God's name. But the word Lord in verse 2 is not in caps, which means it's actually the word Lord, meaning master. So if you scan the psalm, you'll notice that throughout verses 1 to 6, the psalmist alternates between Lord in all caps and Lord, master.
[3:51] And by doing this, he is confessing that the Lord, the proper name, the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Yehovah, the Lord is my God.

He is my master. He is my king. He's aligning himself with the faith handed down to him through history. And so please, he's saying, God, you, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you are my God.
You are my master. Please hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy. But as he cries out to God, he becomes sharply aware that he has no claim on God.
God doesn't owe it to him to listen because he's a sinner. He has violated God's will. He has alienated himself from God.
And in some part, at least, the psalmist seems to see his overwhelming troubles as the consequence of his sins. And this is why he cried out in verse 2 for mercy, not for justice.

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[4:56] He doesn't ask for what I deserve. I deserve better than this. No, he asks for mercy knowing he does not deserve better than this. And so he says in verse 3, If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

His argument isn't, Lord, I've done more good things than bad. It's not, Lord, I'm better than those people. He knows better than to make his own relative righteousness the basis for his acceptance by God.
And the word mark in verse 3 means literally to keep or to watch over. So if you, O Lord, should keep track of, if you, O Lord, should not overlook our iniquities, who could stand?
No one could stand before the Lord God who dwells in unapproachable light. And I think often we think we're not all that bad, morally speaking, because we compare ourselves to people who are more or less like us.
But compared to God's perfect, unerring standards, we don't stand a chance. My teeth are cleanest and whitest in the summer.
[6:00] At least, that's what people tell me. It's the only season when I get complimented on how white my teeth are. And the truth, of course, isn't that my teeth are actually whiter in the summer.

They just look whiter because I have tanned and the surrounding skin of my face has become significantly darker. Right? And so it's throwing into relief the whiteness of my teeth.
And so conversely, the perfect righteousness of God, right, throws into relief our own wickedness. Right? We cannot stand before the Holy God as sinners. And not only that, you know, there is not a single person in the world who knows all the sins that you or I have committed.
Right? Not even you or I know all the sins we have committed. Right? Because we are unaware of many of our sins by either failure of knowledge or failure of memory. Right?
[6:58] But God sees and knows everything and He forgets nothing. Imagine how devastating it would be to meet a person who knows all of your hidden sins.

All of your ugly and broken past. If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is hope for us yet. Verse 4 says, But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. In ourselves we find no hope for mercy.
Right? With man there is vindictiveness. But with God there is mercy. In God, with Him there is forgiveness. Because that's His character. As God revealed Himself to His people in Exodus 34, 6-7, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
Keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. That's who God is. That's His character. With you there is forgiveness.
[8:12] And this forgiveness leads to fear and reverence for God. Of course, there are some who presume on God's mercy. In which case, mercy actually produces more sin. But such people have not truly understood the gravity of their sins and the graciousness of God's forgiveness.

That's what Romans 2, verse 4 is talking about. It says, And having taught us to cry to the Lord, the psalmist tells us to wait on the Lord in verses 5-8.
This second half responds to the first half and is structurally similar. So there was a three-fold repetition of the psalmist's cry to God in verses 1-2. And there's a three-fold repetition of the psalmist's waiting on God in verses 5-6.
In the first half, the psalmist asks God to hear His voice.
In the second half, the psalmist waits on God's word. In the first half, the psalmist cried out to God. In the second person, I cry to you, O Lord.
[9:46] In the second half, the psalmist is testifying to God's people about His hope in God. So he says, In His word, God, he refers to God in the third person. In His word, I hope.

And then he says that his soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning. More than watchmen for the morning. Watchmen, the sentinels, those who stay up through the night to guard the city against attack or a stealth attack at nighttime.
Or against spies or other things. They're looking out for enemies. And they're wary all night long. They're wary of danger and weary from watching. Weary from staying awake.
And they can't wait for the morning. When the sun rises and the danger of a stealth nighttime attack passes, they can't wait for that. To feel relief. They can't wait for the morning when they will finally have relief.

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And be able to get some rest. And even more so than these watchmen, the psalmist waits for the Lord's deliverance. We live in the good times, right?
[10:53] I mean, because these people didn't have the means of deliverance that we now have a full picture of. But the psalmist still enjoined all of God's people to place their hope in His deliverance.

Because he says in verse 7, O Israel, hope in the Lord. For with the Lord there is steadfast love. And with Him is plentiful redemption.
And He will redeem Israel from all His iniquities. Once again, the basis for the psalmist's hope is not in his own relative righteousness or deservingness, but on God's character.
In verse 4, he said, With you there is forgiveness. In verse 7, he says, With the Lord there is steadfast love. And this redemption is not scarce.
It is not partial. But it is plentiful. It is full. And it is overflowing. And with this, He will redeem Israel from all His iniquities. And this is fulfilled in the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.
[11:59] In Ephesians chapter 2, it speaks of the work, the redemption in Jesus Christ. And it says this, But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So that in the coming ages, He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
And earlier in chapter 1, in verse 1, He says the same thing. He talks about the same reality in these terms in verse 7 and following.
In Him, in Jesus, in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.
So the redemption that the psalmist is speaking of here, it came through Jesus Christ and it was accomplished through His blood. Him shedding His blood for us. Him dying on the cross for our sins.
[13:18] Paying the price for our freedom and our redemption. And that's the deliverance that the psalmist hoped in that has now been realized for us. And because of that, all the more as we wait our full redemption that will come when Jesus returns, as we still wrestle with the lingering effects of our sins and the brokenness of our world, we are to cry to God.

We are to hope in Him and wait on Him, knowing that plentiful redemption that has been revealed in Jesus will be consummated. And we will be redeemed and all our iniquities will be forgiven.
Thank you.

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