

**A CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP
SONGS OF ASCENT
MY SOUL WAITS - SUFFERING**

Text: Psalm 130

Key Word: Suffering

Key Thought: The Bible Offers Us a Balanced Approach to Suffering

To be human is to face a variety of life's troubles. Anyone who believes that they can live without facing difficulties is not living in reality. Even the oldest Biblical writings support this fact.

"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

Job 5:7

Suffering is pain - plus. It is pain along with emotional turmoil at various levels. As Christians we should be willing to address our suffering face to face. Running from it will accomplish nothing. **Psalm 130 offers us a practical way of looking at suffering as well as dealing with its effects on our lives.**

A few years ago a new phrase was echoed into the minds of those with terminal illnesses - it was called "Dying with Dignity." The Bible offers a better and more balanced thought by expressing in this Psalm that there is "**Suffering with Dignity.**" Suffering is not looked at as something to be embarrassed about. It is not to be hushed and hidden in our closets where it becomes a skeleton. It is not some puzzle that is unsolvable.

Psalm 130 looks at suffering openly, passionately and finds a solution for those who walk its pathway.

"You know, there is an American myth that denies suffering and the sense of pain. It acts as if they should not be, and hence it devalues the experience of suffering. But this myth denies our encounter with reality."

Ivan Illich

Lets Consider the Biblical Approach to Suffering.

I. IN SUFFERING WE ENTER OUTREACHES OF GOD (Psalm 130:1)

II. IN SUFFERING WE ENVELOP OURSELVES IN GOD (Psalm 130:2)

III. IN SUFFERING WE EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES IN GOD (Psalm 130:5-7)

I. IN SUFFERING WE ENTER OUTREACHES OF GOD (Psalm 130: 1)

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD."

Psalm 130:1

I've heard a number of conversations over the years about entering new heights in God. These times are often very fulfilling and encouraging to our Christian walk. I've experienced these times and like most people, I don't look with anticipation of it ever quitting. But the reality is that we don't live our life on the mountain top. **Mountain tops are actually places where little growth takes place.**

In suffering we enter an opposite dimension of the presence of God.

"The depth is simply the height inverted . . . God is deeper than the deepest depth in man . . . The worst thing that can happen to a man is to have no God to cry out of the depth to."

P.T. Forsyth
"The Cure of Souls"
p. 128

God is able to reach to the lowest of lows to pick us up. As we raise our hand to Him He reaches down to us. No pit is too low for Him to clutch us from. There is no gulf too wide that God cannot span.

Suffering is neither to be glamorized or discounted. It is to be kept in balance. **Although we may not be able to limit the extremes of suffering we can limit our responses to them.** Illusions of immortality and wholeness can bring unnecessary suffering.

"Many people suffer because of the false supposition on which they based their lives. That supposition is that there should be no fear or loneliness, nor confusion or doubt."

Henri Nouwen
"The Wounded Healer"
p.95

"The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their suffering might be like His."

C.S. Lewis
"The Problem of Pain"

I. IN SUFFERING WE ENTER OUTREACHES OF GOD (Psalm 130: 1) (Contd.)

Never think that God has forsaken you because you are facing a time of suffering. Just the opposite is true. Instead of looking from the top to the bottom as Christ sees things we look from the bottom towards the top.

*** Dr. G.F. Pentecost was once trying to comfort a woman who had passed through a difficult trial. Failing in his efforts to cheer her up and dispel her doubts, he took up some embroidery upon which she had been working and said,

"What a confusion of threads! Why waste time on a thing like that?"

Turning over the embroidery, she said, *"Now look at it. You were seeing it from the wrong side."*

"That's exactly it," said Dr. Pentecost. *"You were looking at your trials from the wrong side. Turn them over and see them from the right side - that is, from God's side. The Lord is working out a design of His own for your life, and you must look at things from His point of view, and trust His workmanship."* ***

Walter B. Knight
"Yellow Book of Illustrations"
p. 640

Have you discovered that suffering can be God's height simply inverted in such a way that at one time it didn't make sense. In suffering we outreach into the limits of God.

II. IN SUFFERING WE ENVELOP OURSELVES IN GOD (Psalm 130:2)

"O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy."

Psalm 130:2

This Psalm immerses our suffering in God. He envelops us with His presence when we are engulfed in suffering. Eight times in this Psalm the name of God (Lord) is used.

"Our very pain is a sign of God's remembrance of us, for it would be much worse if we were left in ghastly isolation."

P.T. Forsyth
"The Cure of Souls"
p. 113

II. IN SUFFERING WE ENVELOP OURSELVES IN GOD (Psalm 130:2) (Contd.)

God is closer to us in times of suffering than any other time in our lives. When we think He is afar off He is actually very near.

FOOTPRINTS

*** One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along a beach with the LORD. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonged to him, and the other belonged to the LORD.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it. *"LORD, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."*

The LORD replied, *"My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During the times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."* ***

III. IN SUFFERING WE EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES IN GOD (Psalm 130:5-7)

This psalm offers more than just a description of a reality of suffering it also shows us how we should react during these times. There are two words that describe our response. - **wait and hope.**

"My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning."

Psalm 130:6

A. Wait - A watchman was a very important person although he doesn't seem to do very much. **He simply keeps alert while others slumber.** He waits in anticipation for the dawn to break.

III. IN SUFFERING WE EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES IN GOD (Psalm 130:5-7)

A. Wait (Contd.)

*** While completing Bible College, I worked as a security guard for a firm that was pre-assembling vessels and pipe way for a new Shell Oil plant in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta.

By 4:45 Pm everyone was gone home from the site except the security guard. I then went through the normal routine of inspecting the buildings and ensuring that everything was safe, sealed and secure.

On one occasion I noticed a fire had broke out and I notified the local fire department before doing my best to quench the flames. The fire was only temporary and the darkness returned as the flames were dosed with the extinguishers.

One thing I always enjoyed was watching the darkness dispelled by the dawning of the sun. I knew then that I would soon be finished my shift and be on my way to Bible College for morning classes. ***

Waiting does not mean doing nothing. It is not some fatalistic resignation. It means going about our assigned tasks, confident that a breakthrough is about to take place with the dawning of the morning light upon our darkened situation.

B. Hope - Hoping is different than waiting. Hoping is that confident alert expectation that God will do what he said He would do. Hoping is NOT dreaming. It is not some fantasy or illusion to keep us from boredom or pain. It is the opposite of making plans and demanding God to put them into effect.

"O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption."

Psalm 130:7

*** In George MacDonald's novel titled "**The Princess and Curdie**" there is a part where Curdie reaches the castle. He sees a great staircase and he knows that to reach the tower he must go further.

An interesting thought is brought out in the book that says, "those who work well in the depths more easily understand the heights, for indeed in their true nature they are one and the same." ***

III. IN SUFFERING WE EXAMINE OPPORTUNITIES IN GOD (Psalm 130:5-7) (Contd.)

Psalm 130 puts suffering in balance. It helps us walk the stairway from the depths to reach new heights of hope in God.

"The Psalm does not exhort us to put up with suffering; it does not explain it or explain it away. It is rather, a powerful demonstration that **our place in the depths is not out of the hands of God.**"

Eugene Peterson
"A Long Obedience in the Same Direction"
p.141

We must always remember that depths have a bottom; but heights are boundless.
Knowing this we can improve our skills of waiting and hoping for the day of our deliverance that is at hand.

C:\My Documents\WPWin(X7)\Sermons.2016\Psalms\Ascent\Psalm 130.wpd

Date: June 26/16

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Arms of Love - G

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B. Hope -

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