

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship  
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by  
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## Psalm 130 — Hoping for the Morning

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 130

- On the afternoon of May 1738 John Wesley had listened to and had been moved by the singing of Psalm 130 at the vespers in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. That very evening he attended a reading of Martin Luther's preface to Romans in a meeting house at Aldersgate. Unable to continue his resistance against divine revelation, Wesley believed the gospel of Jesus Christ and was wonderfully converted.
- Martin Luther had classified Psalm 130 among what he called the "Pauline Psalms," because of their emphasis on forgiveness of sins through God's grace.
- Both Psalms 130 and 131 conclude with the same exhortation, instructing Israel to "hope in the LORD" (Pss 130:7; 131:3). Both psalms also use the same poetic style in repeating their main imagery, thereby creating a greater emphasis upon the main themes and providing a potential connection between the two in terms of their arrangement within the psalms (cp. 130:6, "more than watchmen do for the morning" [twice] and 131:2, "like a young child" [twice]).
- In the Psalms of Ascents' five sets of three psalms each focusing on a theme of distress in the first, power in the second, and security in the third, Psalm 130 speaks of power. Power appears to conflict with the theme of hope, which is evident from the repetition of terms for hope in Psalm 130. However, it is hope that provides the pilgrim with power.
- Theme of Psalm 130: *Troubled travelers place their hope in God for forgiveness.*

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 130 (NAU)

**130:1** A Song of Ascents.

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD.

- 130:2** Lord, hear my voice!  
Let Your ears be attentive  
To the voice of my supplications.
- 130:3** If You, LORD, should mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who could stand?
- 130:4** But there is forgiveness with You,  
That You may be feared.
- 130:5** I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait,  
And in His word do I hope.
- 130:6** My soul *waits* for the Lord  
More than the watchmen for the morning;  
*Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.*
- 130:7** O Israel, hope in the LORD;  
For with the LORD there is lovingkindness,  
And with Him is abundant redemption.
- 130:8** And He will redeem Israel  
From all his iniquities.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 130

#### 3.1 Outline

Psalm Heading (v. 1a)

- I. A Prayer for Gracious Forgiveness (vv. 1b–6)
- II. A Promise of Abundant Redemption (vv. 7–8)



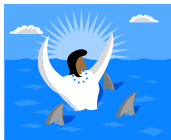
#### 3.2 Notes

##### vv. 1–2 *The Psalmist's Petition*

Verse 1 depicts the psalmist floundering in deep water (cf. Ps 69:1-2, 14-15). Terror and despair grip his heart as he anticipates a death that he can only associate with death by drowning. His circumstances are serious, but their identity remains unspecified. Over his head in trouble, he cries out to the Lord and pleads for grace (v. 2). Since God is sovereign over all circumstances, He is able to answer the psalmist's petition for unmerited divine favor.

- **v. 1** "Out of the depths"
  - The opening words, "out of the depths," point to the valleys of life that sooner or later we all pass through because of our occasional sinful behavior.
  - The psalmist feels pressed down, afflicted, oppressed. His circumstances are demoralizing and debilitating. He is on the borders of life, far from the safe haven of comfort and rest.
  - The paradox is that no matter how lonely and empty the psalmist feels, he knows that God is not far away, because he has already experienced His mercy and forgiveness in the past.

- These kinds of experiences often mean that we trudge on, waiting in hope for God to forgive us again.
- It's sometimes like whiling away the endless hours of a long night, ever hoping for the darkness to end and the sun of healing to arise.
- **vv. 1, 2** "LORD . . . Lord"
  - The psalmist employs three pairs of the divine names "LORD" (*Yahweh*) and "Lord" (*Adonai*). Each of the three pairs occur in the same order (vv. 1b, 2a, 3, 5a, 6a).
  - Following these three pairs, verse 7 closes the psalm's patterned usage of divine names by repeating "LORD" twice, signaling the psalm's climax.
  - Verses 1b–2a contains two parallel lines that mirror each other in inverse order:
    - A Out of the depths
    - B I have cried to You,
    - C O LORD.
    - C' Lord,
    - B' hear
    - A' my voice!
  - In this kind of mirror structure focus is on the central elements. Thus a God-centered theme is apparent (C and C'). Two divine titles draw attention to the twin facts that God has a covenant relationship to His people ("LORD") and that He is master of His creation ("Lord").
- **v. 2** "voice"
  - At the ends of the two lines of verse 2 the repetition of "voice" might indicate that the psalmist verbalized his pleading, rather than praying silently.



**vv. 3–4** *The Psalmist's Peril*

Assurance of deliverance or forgiveness is not part of the psalmist's thinking at this point in the psalm. He is convinced that God knows all and will not overlook his sins. God will hold him accountable; his sin will not go unpunished.

- **v. 3** "iniquities"
  - Verses 3–4 focus primarily on the problem of sin, while verses 3–8 proclaim the psalmist's trust in the Lord to resolve this serious spiritual issue.
  - The Lord's solution includes forgiveness of sins (vv. 3–4) and the granting of mercy (vv. 7–8; cp. v. 2).
  - The repetition of "iniquities" (vv. 3 and 8) brackets verses 3–8 in a way that provides cohesion for that section of the psalm.
- **v. 4** "there is forgiveness with You"
  - This is the only occurrence in Psalms of the Hebrew noun "forgiveness," although the corresponding Hebrew verb ("forgive" or "pardon") appears in 25:11, 86:5, and 103:3.

- Many of us expect confession of sin to be painless and forgiveness instantaneous. We seem not to realize that sin may have lasting natural consequences.
- Indeed, we tend to forget that sin can be so offensive that the offended party needs to hear more than a few words of confession.
  - ✓ Consider a child who disobeys his father and throws a ball in the house, only to shatter the front picture window or break an antique lamp. “Hey, Dad, I’m sorry” probably will not be sufficient to appease the judge in this family court.
- Psalm 130 focuses on the concept of forgiveness, because it is the basis upon which even physical deliverance occurs.
  - ✓ A temporary deliverance from present danger has no lasting value if the individual has not established a spiritual relationship lasting far beyond this world’s circumstances.
- v. 4 “That You may be feared”
  - On the human side of things, forgiveness is the ultimate goal for which the psalmist hopes and waits.
  - On the divine side, however, the ultimate aim is that God might be feared.

#### vv. 5–6 *The Psalmist’s Proclamation*

Because he has not yet experienced either the Lord’s forgiveness for the sin(s) that resulted in his current distress or deliverance from it, the psalmist waits expectantly for any word from God that might indicate an answer to prayer (v. 5; cp. 40:1).

- v. 5 “I wait . . . wait”
  - Rapid repetition of this word (twice in the space of three Hebrew words) draws attention to the concept as a key theme in Psalm 130.
  - In this psalm two themes run side by side: waiting and forgiveness. The psalmist’s point is worthy of thoughtful consideration.
    - ✓ How and under what circumstances does God forgive?
    - ✓ Might He delay forgiveness while we learn the lesson of our sinfulness?
    - ✓ Does He desire more from us than mere words of confession?
- v. 5 “hope”
  - “Hope” (vv. 5c, 7a) is virtually synonymous with the term translated “wait.” These words provide a fourfold emphasis on the concept of hope or expectation, making “wait” or “hope” a theme in the psalm.
- v. 6 “More than the watchmen for the morning”
  - This might indicate “that the petitioner sang the song at night” while “waiting for Yahweh’s intervention, which . . . occurs mostly in the early morning.” — Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60–150*, trans. by Hilton C. Oswald, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 465.





- His night of waiting seems unending, but he knows that morning will come.
  - ✓ Actually, the waiting might be for days upon end, even months. Solutions for the messes our sinful behavior causes are rarely quick and easy. But, when we give ourselves into God’s keeping, He will bring about our deliverance in His perfect timing. He is a forgiving and merciful God.
- Watchmen stand guard duty for a certain portion of the night. They are aware of the passing of time; citizens might even ask them the hour (cf. Isa 21:11-12). When the light of dawn finally comes, the watchman realizes that the time of real danger has passed and that another will come to replace him. Anyone who has stood guard duty in the last hours of the night knows the sweet relief that morning light brings. The psalmist awaits deliverance with the same expectant hope.
  - ✓ Repetition displays unity within the psalm. This appears to be the reason that “watchmen” occurs twice (v. 6) — in order to echo the first use of the same Hebrew root word translated as “mark” in verse 3. This helps unify the psalm for the original audience and perhaps provides an aid for remembering the psalm’s wording.

#### **vv. 7–8 *The Psalmist’s Paranesis and Prophecy***

Israel must wait for the Lord, because He exercises “lovingkindness” (= “loyal love”) toward His people (v. 7a-b). God has not abandoned them, nor will He neglect to fulfill His covenant with them. Indeed, He will deliver Israel completely from their sins (v. 8). Just as He will deliver the psalmist from his physical distress, the covenant Lord will deliver His people from their greater spiritual distress.

- **v. 7 “O Israel, hope in the LORD”**
  - The psalmist exhorts the community to wait for the Lord. He has worked through his problem, understood the divine solution (which includes waiting), and exhorts Israel to follow his example.
  - They must be willing to wait patiently until their circumstances turn for the better.
    - ✓ The wilderness wanderings lasted for two generations.
    - ✓ The exile in Babylon lasted for seventy years.
    - ✓ Many Israelites never saw the time of inheritance or the time of restoration.
  - Confession of sin did not bring about immediate possession of the land nor restoration to the land. Complete deliverance is yet to come.
  - Meanwhile the believer must focus on his or her Deliverer — rely on Him (v. 5), wait for Him (v. 5), yearn for Him (v. 6), and hope in Him (v. 7).
- **v. 7 “with Him is abundant redemption”**
  - Psalm 130’s key interpretive issue involves the understanding of “redemption/redeem” (vv. 7, 8).

- ✓ Are the psalmist's statements merely references to divine rescue from earthly troubles, or does the psalmist intend that his readers understand them as indications of spiritual salvation—forgiveness of sins?
- ✓ This Hebrew term for “redeem” has a commercial background (namely, making a ransom payment or providing a redemption price). Here it implies deliverance by means of a payment. The psalm includes no identification of the form of payment, who paid it, or to whom it was paid.
- ✓ “Abundant” or even “plenteous redemption.” The Hebrew noun is somewhat rare in Scripture, occurring only here, Psalm 111:9; Exodus 8:19; and Isaiah 50:2.
- ✓ The double occurrence of “redeem” brings the psalm to a close with a focus on the deliverance “From all his iniquities.” This prepositional phrase makes it clear that the psalmist does not intend that his readers think only of deliverance from physical circumstances and conditions. This is a spiritual matter involving all of Israel's iniquities or guilt.
- ✓ Such a focus is the basis for the synagogue's selection of Psalm 130 as a reading for the Day of Atonement.
- The Hebrew noun “redemption” is somewhat rare in Scripture, occurring only here, Psalm 111:9; Exodus 8:19; and Isaiah 50:2.
- v. 7 “abundant redemption”
  - “The expression ‘full redemption’ relates his favor to many different circumstances as well as the many objects of his grace.” — Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms,” in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 5:802.
  - “Coverdale's beautiful expression, *plenteous redemption*, adopted by AV, RV, has been happily retained in RSV; it shines very brightly against the darkness of the psalm's beginning.” — Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73–150: A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975), 447.
  - Even the ancient Jewish Targum employs “plenteous redemption” as the translation.
- v. 8 “He will redeem Israel”
  - Is the declaration historical (“He has redeemed”), prophetic (“He will *soon* redeem”), or eschatological (“He will *ultimately* redeem”)?
    - ✓ The historical viewpoint might point to the people of Israel coming to the Temple to praise the Lord for their deliverance from the Babylonian captivity.
    - ✓ The prophetic interpretation might represent Israel as performing an annual pilgrimage. At that time, they would be hoping for deliverance to come from some unidentified enemy or catastrophe (such as a locust plague or famine).
    - ✓ The eschatological view would best apply to a distant expectation that God will ultimately fulfill all of His covenant promises for a permanent

state of peace and righteousness. Such a state could only come about under the benevolent and just reign of King Messiah.

- “The declaration has an eschatological reach unusual in the Old Testament. Psalm 25:22 prays for the LORD ‘to redeem Israel from all its troubles,’ a prayer that in its similarity with the declaration reminds us that redemption includes liberation not only from guilt but also from the whole imprisoning network of sin’s effects on life.” — James Luther Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 407.
- Psalm 130 might look to more than one reference or setting.
  - ✓ First, the psalmist speaks of his immediate distress (unspecified circumstances) that is the consequence of his sinful behavior.
  - ✓ Second, the psalmist might speak of Israel’s eventual deliverance from the Babylonian exile.
  - ✓ Lastly, such deliverances might be the springboard to consideration of an eschatological deliverance in the distant future.

#### 4.0 Singing Psalm 130

##### “From the Depths Do I Invoke Thee”

(Tune: “Jesus Calls Us” or “In the Cross of Christ I Glory” or “Evening Prayer” (Stebbins) or “Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy” or “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”)



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|--|--|
| <p>1 From the depths do I invoke Thee,<br/>Lord, to me incline Thine ear;<br/>To my voice be Thou attentive,<br/>And my supplications hear.</p> <p>3 For Jehovah I am waiting<br/>And my hope is in His Word;<br/>In His Word of promise given,<br/>Yea, my soul waits for the Lord.</p> <p>5 Hope in God, ye waiting people,<br/>Mercies great in Him abound;<br/>With the Lord a full redemption<br/>From the guilt of sin is found.</p> | <p>2 Lord, if Thou shouldst mark transgressions,<br/>In Thy presence who shall stand?<br/>But with Thee there is forgiveness,<br/>That Thy Name may fear command.</p> <p>4 For the Lord my soul is waiting<br/>More than watchers in the night;<br/>More than they for morning watching,<br/>Watching for the morning light.</p> |
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— Words: Author unknown

##### “Jesus, I Come”

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|--|---|
| <p>1 Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,<br/>Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;<br/>Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,<br/>Jesus, I come to Thee;<br/>Out of my sickness, into Thy health,<br/>Out of my want and into Thy wealth,<br/>Out of my sin and into Thyself,<br/>Jesus, I come to Thee.</p> | <p>2 Out of my shameful failure and loss,<br/>Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;<br/>Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,<br/>Jesus, I come to Thee.<br/>Out of earth’s sorrows into Thy balm,<br/>Out of life’s storms and into Thy calm,<br/>Out of distress to jubilant psalm,<br/>Jesus, I come to Thee.</p> |
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**3** Out of unrest and arrogant pride,  
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;  
Into Thy blessèd will to abide,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.  
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love,  
Out of despair into raptures above,  
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.

**4** Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,  
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;  
Into the joy and light of Thy throne,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.  
Out of the depths of ruin untold,  
Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,  
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,  
Jesus, I come to Thee.

— Words: William T. Sleeper (1887)  
Music: George Stebbins

## 5.0 Praying Psalm 130

- Oh Lord, hear my prayer and be gracious to me. [vv. 1–2]
- God, my iniquities are great and deserving of Your wrath. [v. 3]
- Father, how I praise You for forgiving my sins. [v. 4]
- Lord Jesus, I hope in Your Word and wait for You. [vv. 5–6]
- Thank You, Lord, for redeeming me fully from my sins. [vv. 7–8]



## 6.0 Applying Psalm 130

- We need forgiveness. Without a right relationship to God, there is no promise of deliverance from even the temporal trials of life.
- We await our own deliverance from this life and its troubles with great expectation. Our current circumstances cannot separate us from the Lord and His loyal love.
- We must confess our sinful condition and petition for grace (unmerited divine favor).
- Confession alone is inadequate to bring about complete restoration.
- There are natural consequences for our sins.
  - ✓ Drug addiction might leave permanent damage to a person’s brain that will never be healed within one’s lifetime.
  - ✓ Abuse of a spouse’s trust can lead to years of distrust and suspicion.
  - ✓ Failure to be consistent in living one’s faith can produce multiplied faithlessness in one’s children and grandchildren lasting for generations.
- We must wait for the healing of the consequences from our sin. Waiting is part of the process of recovery, for even spiritual wounds take time to heal.

Modern Christians can identify with the need for confession of sin in order to renew fellowship with God, rather than to walk in the deathlike darkness of broken fellowship (cf. 1 John 1:8–2:2). Restoring that fellowship begins with focusing intently upon Him alone. That hope for renewed fellowship is but one application of the truths revealed in Psalm 130. Like Israel, New Testament believers have an eschatological hope (Rom 8:23-39) that includes redemption, forgiveness, security, and final glorification. We, too, await our full salvation (1 Pet 1:4-9). Like watchmen waiting for the morning we ought to cry out, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20). He is Israel’s “sun of vindication [who] will rise with healing wings” (Mal 4:2). He is also the hope of the Church.