



GROWING UP IN GOD
A JOURNEY THROUGH THE PSALMS OF ASCENT

Session 11 November 2011

Psalm 130 NCV

A Prayer for Mercy

A song for going up to worship.

¹ LORD, I am in great trouble,
so I call out to you.

² Lord, hear my voice;
listen to my prayer for help.

³ LORD, if you punished people for all their sins,
no one would be left, Lord.

⁴ But you forgive us,
so you are respected.

⁵ I wait for the Lord to help me,
and I trust his word.

⁶ I wait for the Lord to help me
more than night watchmen wait for the dawn,
more than night watchmen wait for the dawn.

⁷ People of Israel, put your hope in the Lord
because he is loving
and able to save.

⁸ He will save Israel
from all their sins.

Trouble, distress – great motivators for prayer...The psalmist is in trouble...even ‘*great trouble*’...and he cries out, **knowing** that the Lord will hear him...he has come to the place where he knows what God is like in His infinite love and concern for His creatures – he knows that –

Psalm 145:18 NKJV

¹⁸ *The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.*

So we find him in great trouble and distress and this time he admits that the situation in which he finds himself, just could be of his own making...not easy for some of us to do – to admit that **we** might be the cause of our own distress - but the psalmist knows he has fallen short of God's target of goodness, he's sinned, and he isn't about to try to lay blame on someone else; but there's something else he's sure of too, that is God's mercy and grace towards those who have tripped up and come clean about it, those who will swallow their pride and admit they missed it –

'It's me, it's me, it's me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer...'

He knows there is forgiveness with God.

So he cries out and then he watches for Him who is faithful; he hopes in Him because He is loving and what starts out as a cry for help, ends in glorious praise...

*⁸ He will save Israel
from all their sins.*

Lord, where else can we go?

Sin - it's the human condition; missing the mark, it's why we need Him so desperately...

*'For Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and has shed His own blood for my soul.'*¹

Father, **thank you** for the Blood -

1 John 1: 7 – 10 NLV

⁷If we live in the light as He is in the light, we share what we have in God with each other. And the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, makes our lives clean from all sin.

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we lie to ourselves and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.

¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. And His Word is not in our hearts.'

Confession.

Confession = agreeing with God, *'it was me...'* pleading guilty...finding forgiveness.

How can we hold others in unforgiveness when we have received such mercy ourselves...the parable of the unforgiving servant – you can look at it yourself - if you need to...

Matthew 18: 21 – 35 NKJV

²¹Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to

seventy times seven.²³ Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.²⁴ And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.²⁵ But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.²⁶ The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'²⁷ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

²⁸ "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'²⁹ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'³⁰ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.³¹ So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.³² Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.³³ Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'³⁴ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.³⁵ "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Forgiveness, freely given...we need to pass it on to others...mercy too, oh, mercy, what a glorious thing...He is merciful, if He wasn't where would we be?

So the psalmist calls out to God, knowing He is merciful, knowing He will answer, knowing God will forgive him and be merciful to him, knowing God is with him and for him.

God is with us, and He is for us, He has made a way for us...it's our security – He has made provision for all our vicissitudes – all our ups and downs and ins and outs...

He is able, He is loving; faithful and willing to cleanse us and save us – He's made **provision** for us – this word is made up of two words, 'pro' – before and vision, or 'video', to see – He sees before, in advance what we need – He saw, and He was willing and He paid the price – isn't that wonderful, the willingness of God to reach down to our 'helpless estate' – giving His own Son's blood that we might live...because He says, we are worth it...

We're no less helpless than the psalmist when the chips are down – all our so called 'self-sufficiency' vanishes and we are left clinging to Him...not a bad place to be...total dependence on Him alone, our Maker, our Lover and our Keeper...

Takes us back to Psalm 121...

God makes sure that we are shut up to **Him** when trouble or confusion hits...He is the **only** place of safety and He is **jealous** to be our only source of supply. He is jealous for our heart and our affections, He is jealous to be everything to us, the Lord our God whose name is – Jealous - is our Keeper.

Eugene Peterson in his brilliant book 'A Long Obedience in the same Direction' says this:

'The only serious mistake we can make when illness comes or anxiety threatens, when conflict disturbs our relationships with others, is to conclude that God has gotten bored looking after us and has shifted His attention to a more exciting Christian...'

Don't run from – run towards...Him.

This is the certainty we have, He **will** rescue us, He **will** save – He's like that – whether we admit we are wrong or not...

Not only are we learning about ourselves on this climb but we are learning about the heart of the Father, what a wonderful God He is...

Sometimes it is only when we are desperate and we feel we have really missed it, that we get to see just **how much** He loves us and is committed to us – the psalmist describes it as *'watching for dawn'* – when you're holed up in a cave surrounded by the enemy, you watch anxiously for the dawn...

That's how it is with us, watching intently for **Him**; tuning out the other voices; listening only for the familiar voice that will bring relief...one word from You and it will be all right...

Even if it isn't deliverance...

Just the joy of hearing His voice, the calming effect of the Shepherd's voice on the sheep –

Knowing He is there...

'Father, I'm in the skin agin!'

'I am with you...never will I leave you, never will I forsake you...'

In difficult circumstances we must always take our cue from God – people will give us advice that is safe; they will speak of rescue, of being careful...bless 'em, they are unconsciously putting their fears on us...

Psalm 27:13 NASB

*¹³I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.'*

'I would have despaired...unless'

But I didn't - there is no substitute for your own relational searching for God's heart.

Now, I have come to the place where I **can** believe that I will see the goodness of the Lord in this life, in the land of the living...trust has become flesh on me – I am beginning to know Him and put away my evil heart of unbelief...

Unbelief is evil because it impacts your heart in such a negative way it commits you to a life of toil, strife, and pain...it damages and destroys everything in its path...

'Trust in the Lord and do good...' Psalm 37:3

I **will** see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living...put your hope in the Lord because he is infinitely loving, He is infinitely forgiving...I am persuaded – we move, like the psalmist, from distress and despair to -

Declaration.

God is Good, He's Good, and He's **VERY** good...I won't be swayed...all this is true, **but** He is with me and He is for me...no weapon formed against me will prosper...

Prosper.

That's what hard times are for so we may learn to prosper – we won't grow without them.

Now, we are growing up and learning not to call out constantly for deliverance, but to see the growth opportunity He is holding out to us in these difficult situations.

They are 'growing compost' for us – pressing us deeper into His heart, causing us to take root and grow there...and **produce** something from the difficulties, that something is – fruit – the fruit of patience perhaps, self-control maybe, endurance, perseverance? In the face of unchanging circumstances...

Hmmmm...

In difficult and impossible times we get to prove things out; it is the trials and temptations, the mistakes, the tribulations and the difficulties that **prove** His faithfulness – He will **never** leave us or forsake us – He's promised –

God is with us, and He is for us...and He is **BIG** enough –

'Need some help? I'll give you some help; I'm good at that...let Me help you...'

Time after time we prove Him faithful that promised – even when we've messed up – particularly when we have messed up – panic, promise, prosperity, patience, particularly – Ohhh those 'p' words...**Don't panic**, I've picked you...

Isaiah 41 The Message

'You're my servant, serving on my side.

I've picked you. I haven't dropped you.'

Don't panic. I'm with you.

There's no need to fear for I'm your God.

I'll give you strength. I'll help you.

I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you.

¹¹⁻¹³"Count on it: Everyone who had it in for you

will end up out in the cold—

real losers.

Those who worked against you

*will end up empty-handed—
nothing to show for their lives.
When you go out looking for your old adversaries
you won't find them—
Not a trace of your old enemies,
not even a memory.
That's right. Because I, your God,
have a firm grip on you and I'm not letting go.
I'm telling you, 'Don't panic.
I'm right here to help you.'*

*¹⁴⁻¹⁶"Do you feel like a lowly worm, Jacob?
Don't be afraid.
Feel like a fragile insect, Israel?
I'll help you.
I, God, want to reassure you.*

'I'll help you' – when God says something three times, He means it...

When we've really missed it and messed up...

He never gives up.

He seeks the hurting, the maimed, the wandering and the lost.

He woos the rebellious and the confused.

He is patient with the slow and He loves the marginalised.

*'LORD, if you punished people for all their sins,
no one would be left, Lord.'*

Because of His forgiveness, His blood, we have a place to stand...

Wait and watch.

Habakkuk 2:1 NKJV

*¹ I will stand my watch
And set myself on the rampart,
And watch to see what He will say to me,
And what I will answer when I am corrected.*

He will turn up, He will come...even if He brings correction...

Confidence.

We are getting to the place where we **know** Him, this is what our climb is all about; this is what growing up is all about; getting into the heart of the God who loves us to distraction; He doesn't deny our weaknesses and failings and He does correct us because we need it, but all the time He gently encourages us to grow into the likeness of His Son...

And we begin to say with Abraham,

'I know You, you wouldn't punish the righteous with the wicked...'

'Far be it from You...'

It makes all the tribulation, tests, and trials of life worthwhile - *'bring it on!'*

Suddenly they become the things that lift us up, not trip us up and we can almost look forward to the next one we are presented with knowing that in everything we should give thanks, and that every trial has an **upgrade** hidden within it...

Every trial, every circumstance, can bring us into a higher, deeper place in God's heart – if we use it and approach it properly – upgrade – to a place of -

Romans 12:12 NKJV

¹²rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;'

He is, after all, the author and finisher of our faith...

Our Maker, our Lover, our Keeper, our Friend...

'You stole my fears and put hope in my pocket...'

Hebrews 12: 1 – 2 NKJV

The Race of Faith

¹Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'

Endurance...otherwise known as patience...He will come, He will deliver, He will forgive.

Your current circumstances are there for a **purpose**, another 'p' word, they are there to bring an enhancement, an upgrade, taking you higher in your relationship with Him, deeper into His heart, into His mind that you might obtain the mind of Christ – taking your thinking to a whole new level -

He wants to **be** something for you He couldn't be at any other time these circumstances are the 'compost' for your growth in Him...

And He wants to show you another aspect of His love for you in this - just what is it?

What is it He wants to **be** to you that He couldn't be at any other time?

Why not stop right there and ask Him...

*¹³I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.'*

*'I would have despaired...**unless**...'*

But I **saw** the goodness of the Lord in the land of the Living.

*⁷ People of Israel, put your hope in the Lord
because he is loving
and able to save.
⁸ He will save Israel
from all their sins.*

¹H.G.Spafford *'When peace like a river'*

²Eugene Peterson, *'A Long obedience in the same direction'*