

***Micah 7:18, 19 (Opening)***

*18 Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity  
and passing over transgression  
for the remnant of his inheritance?*

*He does not retain his anger forever,  
because he delights in steadfast love.*

*19 He will again have compassion on us;  
he will tread our iniquities underfoot.  
You will cast all our sins  
into the depths of the sea.*

Have you ever taken a long road trip?

I remember one spring break I went down to Lakeland Florida with some friends from college; we drove non-stop from the Boston area all the way down. We only stopped for food and bathroom breaks. It took us about 24 hours or so.

Another time, and this one is actually a little more crazy, Marie and I drove back here to Maine from Denver Colorado with three kids in the van. We left on a Friday afternoon, after I had finished work, and stopped the next night around midnight or so east of Indianapolis Indiana. We tried to stop sooner, but there was an antique car show in Indianapolis that weekend, and all the hotels were booked full within a 100 mile radius of the city. That just proves you should always plan ahead.

What do you like to do when you take a road trip? We would sometimes play games, like keeping track of what states license plates we saw, or what we called the "Alphabet game" where we would try to find a sign or license plate with each letter of the alphabet, in order. Just like in Scrabble, J, Q, X and Z were the hard ones!

When I was a kid, we'd sing songs in the car when we went places. There were always old favorites, but they were usually on the strange side.

Whenever I get in the car to drive, I need to have the radio on. Sometimes I'll sing along with the radio out loud, but almost always I'm singing in my head. There's something about music for me that makes the drive go faster.

The Israelites were told there were three times a year that they were to be at the Temple for a festival: Passover, the Festival of Weeks or the Harvest, and the Festival of Booths or Ingathering. Now, when they were wandering around in the wilderness, before God allowed them to go into the Promised Land, it was easy for them to make it to the

Tabernacle for these three festivals. But, once they got to the Promised Land, and spread out over that large area, it took a little more effort to get to, first the Tabernacle, and then the Temple, once Solomon built it.

Once the Temple was established in Jerusalem, whenever someone would travel to Jerusalem, they would go “up to Jerusalem”, primarily because it was built on a high hill, so you would have to climb up to get to the city. Also, since the Temple was there, Jerusalem was a higher place to go spiritually, too, so that was another reason to go “up to Jerusalem”.

The trip “Up to Jerusalem” was a long one for most of the Israelites; not many of them were privileged enough to live close by; and the land was distributed by family tribe, so some tribes had further to go than others. During their trips to the Temple for the three festivals, they would often sing Psalms to encourage each other and to prepare themselves for the Festival they were going to take part in. There are 15 Psalms that are described as “Songs of Ascents”, Psalms 120 – 134. These Psalms are believed to have been their “traveling songs” for when they went “Up to Jerusalem”.

All the Songs of Ascents are quite short, and easy to memorize, but all have very helpful themes for the pilgrims on their journeys. Today I want to look at Psalm 130. But I want to do something a little different (what a surprise, I’m going to do something different!).

I’d like you to take some paper and something to write with, and write the numbers 1 through 9 down the left side, but leave some space, because I’m going to ask you do write something after each number.

Now that you’ve got that done, what I’m going to do is read Psalm 130, and I’ll pause after each verse. I’d like you to write down the first thing that comes to mind after I read that verse. It doesn’t matter if it makes sense, just write it down. If I read the first verse and the first thing that comes to your mind is “donuts”, write it down.

There's only eight verses in Psalm 130. So why did I ask you to write the numbers from one to nine? Once I'm done, write down your overall feeling of the Psalm.

### ***Psalm 130***

*My Soul Waits for the Lord*

*A SONG OF ASCENTS.*

- 1 *Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!*
- 2 *O Lord, hear my voice!*  
*Let your ears be attentive*  
*to the voice of my pleas for mercy!*
- 3 *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,*  
*O Lord, who could stand?*
- 4 *But with you there is forgiveness,*  
*that you may be feared.*
- 5 *I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,*  
*and in his word I hope;*
- 6 *my soul waits for the Lord*  
*more than watchmen for the morning,*  
*more than watchmen for the morning.*
- 7 *O Israel, hope in the LORD!*  
*For with the LORD there is steadfast love,*  
*and with him is plentiful redemption.*
- 8 *And he will redeem Israel*  
*from all his iniquities.*

Now that you've got your notes about this Psalm, I'll go back over it, verse by verse, and tell you about what I see in it, and later, we'll compare notes.

- 1 *Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!*

Why is it that we always wait until we reach rock bottom before we call to God for help? It would save us so much pain and sorrow if we would just rely on God all the time.

Sometimes, when we feel like we're in the depths, it's not really our fault. Depression is a real problem. Sometimes counseling can help, but sometimes it's caused by a chemical imbalance, and you need medication to help you feel better. It's not a sin to be depressed, or to need to take medication to help you feel better. It's important to remember, though, that God is there to help us and guide us.

<sup>2</sup>            *O Lord, hear my voice!*  
              *Let your ears be attentive*  
              *to the voice of my pleas for mercy!*

Have you ever had a time when you felt that God wasn't listening to you? Like your prayers are just going nowhere? Like they're bouncing off the sky? Like you're talking but no one is listening? This is what I hear the author of this Psalm saying. God, listen to me. I know I'm little and insignificant, but I need your help right now, so please listen to me.

<sup>3</sup>            *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,*  
              *O Lord, who could stand?*

***Romans 3:23***

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

I'm going to take it out of its full context for now, but we'll come back to it. If God keeps track of our sins (and I think he does, in a way), how can he accept us? We're all so broken, so far from perfect, so unacceptable in His eyes.

<sup>4</sup>            *But with you there is forgiveness,*  
              *that you may be feared.*

God, through Jesus, provides that way for us to be acceptable. By accepting Jesus' sacrifice for our sins, we become children of God, acceptable in His sight.

***John 1:12, 13***

*12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.*

*5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;*

To me, this sounds like the author of the Psalm is saying "Please God, tell me I'm OK. I'm waiting for you to say the word to me that I'm OK." But there's a few other ways we could look at this, too.

If we're in trouble, one way to feel better is to read the Bible. Sometimes the best thing you can do is just sit and read, and His word will help you, will calm you, and will comfort you. Of course, it's more than just reading the word, you need to, as Jesus said, put it into practice.

*6 my soul waits for the Lord  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.*

Have you ever worked the night shift? My least favorite shift was working nights. There's just something about 3:00 AM that makes the entire night seem like it drags on forever. Is the morning EVER going to come? Some nights it seems like there's just not enough coffee in the world to get you past that 3:00 AM slump.

That's how I see this verse; it's almost like a kid waiting for Christmas morning; that anticipation that you can almost taste. "I know God is

going to answer me, and I know it will be in his timing, but ... how long?" Is it morning yet?

<sup>7</sup> *O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is plentiful redemption.*

Here again we have the Hebrew word "kheh-sed", or in the Greek version of the Old Testament, agape. God has that unconditional love for us. He chooses to love us in that way, and God embodies that kind of love, He is made up of it. And His redemption doesn't end; His cup of redemption, like in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, continuously flows over onto us. He continuously covers the sins of His children.

Take a look at Jeremiah 31:31-34.

### ***Jeremiah 31:31-34***

<sup>31</sup> *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

And that ties in nicely with the last verse of Psalm 130.

<sup>8</sup> *And he will redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.*

God has provided us a way out from under our sins. He provided us the perfect sacrifice, His own son, who was sinless. Only a perfect sacrifice can cover our sins, and believing that Jesus was that perfect sacrifice, and accepting His sacrifice as the Son of God for our sins, covers us with His blood. Just like the animal sacrifices that the Israelites made for sin, and the blood was sprinkled on the congregation, we are covered by the blood of Christ, figuratively in this world, but literally in the spiritual world.

Because we accept the sacrifice as being for us, and obey Christ as our Lord, doing what He says, when God sees us, we are covered by Christ, and that makes us acceptable in God's sight. So, because of that, like in the John 1 passage, we can be adopted as sons and daughters of God, to be like Him; we can be made holy, even though we fail.

**1 Peter 4:7-8 (Closing)**

*<sup>7</sup> The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. <sup>8</sup> Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*