

# Worship on the Journey

{the songs of ascent}

## Worship Out of the Depths

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Psalm 130 & 131

Overview

Having a realistic understanding of our relationships is a very important life skill. Trusting people who should not be trusted and not trusting people who should be trusted can cause a very chaotic and miserable life. Psalms 130-131 are psalms which encourage the pilgrim traveling toward the place of worship to know his position before the Lord and demonstrates how knowing that position moves the pilgrim toward a correct response:

- to know that out of the depths the only One to call on is the merciful LORD;
- to know the purposeful forgiveness that comes only from the LORD;
- to know the joy of waiting for the Lord;
- and out of that depth of experiential knowledge be able to encourage fellow pilgrims to rest in the assurance which comes from the One who alone is worthy of their trust!

## Introduction

Among several others (see also Psalm 32, 51 and 143), Psalm 130 has been referred to as a “Pauline Psalm.” It is so named because of the psalmist’s clear expression of the good news that God’s forgiveness is obtained by grace alone, apart from any human effort. The psalm assures the pilgrim on the journey to worship that God is “faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Having found the assurance of the forgiveness of sin in God alone, Psalm 131 exhorts the pilgrim to live maturely by finding hope and assurance now and forever in God alone.

1. Attention called for by the pilgrim (because of his condition): My sin has me in the depths of despair [vv. 1-2]

The phrase “Out of the depths...” sets the tone for Psalm 130 and helps the reader understand the posture of the psalmist.... he has nowhere to look but up!

- a. I cry to you
- b. Hear my voice
- c. Let your ears be attentive...

2. Acknowledgment (because of the state of his soul) and Answer of the pilgrim (because of his incapacity to act on his own): No one can stand up under the just judgement of the Living God, but thankfully, with God alone, there is purposeful forgiveness! Resolved to trust (vv. 3-6)

The “If...But” pattern seen in verses 3-4 emphasizes both the desperation (if the LORD DID mark iniquities) of the pilgrim and the delight of the forgiveness (because “with you, there is forgiveness!): the reverence of and relationship with the Creator/Owner!

- a. I wait for the LORD
- b. My soul waits
- c. In his word I hope

3. Assurance of the pilgrim (because of the character and action of the LORD): The LORD will do that which he has promised! (vv. 7-8)

- a. With the LORD there is steadfast love
- b. With the LORD there is plentiful redemption

1. When was the last time you were troubled about your sin? What led you to that point? Is there something about the phrase “out of the depths” that causes discomfort for you?
2. What is your understanding of “mercy” (v. 2)? What causes your need for mercy? How does reflection on your need for mercy grow your understanding of God and your relationship to him?
3. What is the answer to the rhetorical question in verse 3? How should that shape my response toward God for the forgiveness He alone provides? What is the result of God’s forgiveness? How does that differ from how, humanly speaking, we might view God’s forgiveness of our sin? (Romans 6:1)
4. What is the psalmist’s response to the forgiveness God offers? What are the advantages of “...wait[ing] for the Lord”? What disadvantages might there be to NOT doing so?
5. What level of confidence do you have in the promises of God? Reflect upon and recount some faith-building experiences the LORD has given to you in recent months/years.
6. How would you put into practice what the psalmist says in Psalm 131:1: a) not lifting up your heart; b) not thinking too highly of yourself; c) not being overly ambitious?
7. From Psalm 131, how does the exhortation in verse 3 influence your perspective for daily living?