

Waiting for the LORD

For: Voice of the Church

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We do a lot of waiting. Students wait for exam results. Applicants wait for a job offer. Sick people wait to find out the results of a medical test. The whole world is waiting for the end of COVID-19. Much of this waiting is marked by intensity.

In Psalm 130:5,6 we read: “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.” It’s about waiting for the LORD and looking to him with great expectation.

We don’t know who the author of Psalm 130 is. The time of writing is also unknown to us. We do know that the Psalmist was in distress because he begins by saying, “Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy” (Ps 130:1,2)! Perhaps he was calling out to the LORD from personal hardships such as sickness or inter-personal difficulties. Perhaps he was distressed by the reality of sin in his personal life and all the resulting brokenness. He does say, “If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared” (Ps 130:3,4). And he goes on to end the Psalm by speaking about redemption by the LORD from sin: “And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Ps 130:8).

What was the Psalmist waiting for? Perhaps it was relief from personal hardships – and as he was waiting, he was comforted that God is forgiving and that therefore his sins did not prevent God from helping. The Psalmist was certainly waiting for deliverance from the reality of sin itself. As he says, “O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Ps 130:7,8). Maybe it’s best to put it like this: The Psalmist was waiting for deliverance from sin and all its resulting brokenness! We live in a fallen and broken world, and this weighed so heavily on the Psalmist that he called out to the LORD about it and expressed that he was waiting for the LORD to deliver him.

There are different kinds of waiting. The character of our waiting can be such that it is a passive waiting. That’s the attitude that perhaps it will come, perhaps not. It’s a wait-and-see attitude. The character of our waiting can also be such that it is an active waiting. That’s the situation when it is front-and-centre in our minds, top-of-mind, and consumes us. That’s the character of waiting Psalm 130 expresses.

The Psalmist speaks about waiting like the watchmen waited on the walls of a city for morning. In Israel, watchmen stood on city walls and guarded the city against a stealth night attack. The night was filled with danger as enemies could attack under cover of darkness. Watchmen standing on the walls scanned the landscape for danger. Shadows and sounds made the sentries tense. Those sentries could hardly wait for the night to be over! Every Israelite could relate to this picture. Even today, the night

holds special dangers for the military – night vision equipment notwithstanding. Sentries of all times want the night to be over and are waiting for morning.

The Psalmist says that he is waiting for the LORD – the One who can deliver from sin and all its brokenness. His focus was on the LORD; the Psalmist kept looking to the LORD! The repetition of this fact no less than three times in Psalm 130:5,6 emphasizes this: “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits...my soul waits for the LORD...” Moreover, the Psalmist conveys the intensity of his waiting by saying “...my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning” (Ps 130:6). Watchmen were intense in waiting, but the Psalmist says that he is even more intense! And he even repeats this for emphasis.

If you are a Christian, are you waiting for the LORD with intense expectation – to deliver us from the COVID-19 pandemic, to deliver you from more personal difficulties, to deliver us from this fallen and broken world and all its sin by ushering in the new world promised in Scripture?

The Psalmist clung to God, thereby indicating that God was his only hope and comfort. The Psalmist’s confidence in this waiting was founded in God.

Notice that the Psalmist speaks about “the LORD” (upper case) (“Yahweh”) in Psalm 130:5: “I wait for the LORD...” It is the Name which means “I am who I am” -- indicating that God is who he says he is and does what he says he will do. This is the covenant Name of God expressing his faithfulness toward his people. We can be confident in the LORD! When Israel was pining away in the slavery of Egypt and waiting for deliverance, God revealed himself with this Name to Moses just before the exodus from Egypt and told Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Ex 3:14). This was meant to inspire hope in the hearts of the people of Israel!

Having said that he is waiting for the LORD, the Psalmist goes on to say, “...and in his word I hope...” (Ps 130:5). God and his Word are closely linked. As God himself is true and sure, so God’s Word of promise is true and sure! God had made promises to the patriarch Abraham and had said in Genesis 17:7, “And I will...be God to you and to your offspring after you.” God would act on behalf of his people! This gave the Psalmist a sense of great expectation as he waited. It gave him hope! Therefore, at the end of this Psalm, the Psalmist calls on all Israel to be filled with hope: “O Israel, hope in the LORD” (Ps 130:8)! That applies to us today too.

The Psalmist knew about God’s steadfast love. He says in Psalm 130:7, “For with the LORD there is steadfast love....” A multi-faceted word is used in Hebrew which points to God’s unfailing love and kindness. It’s actually a covenantal term which indicates the LORD’s attitude toward his people in the covenant of grace – the relationship of fellowship between God and his people. When we confess our sins before the LORD, we may bask in the LORD’s love toward us.

The Psalmist celebrates the gospel of redemption when he says that “...with [the LORD] is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities” (Ps 130:7,8). To redeem means to buy and purchase. The gospel is about Jesus Christ paying the price for our sins and purchasing people to be his own possession. In 1 Peter 1:18,19 we read, “...you were ransomed...not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ...” Christ died on the cross of Calvary to redeem sinners! Ultimately, the Psalmist was waiting for that. The Old Testament believers were waiting for the coming Saviour. In fact, Psalm 130 is a Song of Ascents – one of those Psalms the faithful sang as

they travelled to the temple at Jerusalem for the annual feast days. Everything at the temple – the teaching and the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law -- pointed to the coming Saviour. God had promised this Saviour immediately after the Fall into sin when he had declared that the Seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). The Bible is about the history of redemption.

God's promise of a Saviour was fulfilled when Christ came into the world. An angel told Joseph in a dream in Matthew 1:21, "...you shall call his name Jesus, for he will *save* his people from their sins." Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied regarding Jesus Christ when he said in Luke 1:68, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and *redeemed* his people..." On the night of Christ's birth, an angel announced to the shepherds in Luke 2:10,11, "...I bring you good news of great joy...For unto you is born this day in the city of David a *Savior*, who is Christ the Lord." The long-awaited Saviour to redeem God's people was born!

The faithful among God's people were waiting for the fulfillment of that promise. Of Simeon we read in Luke 2:25 that he "...was righteous and devout, *waiting* for the consolation of Israel..." He saw the Christ-child at the temple and blessed God and said, "...my eyes have seen your salvation..." (Lk 2:30). We also read in Luke 2 about the woman Anna who did not depart from the temple, fasting night and day, which is evidence of her waiting. She too saw the Christ-child at the temple and spoke of him "...to all who were *waiting* for the redemption of Jerusalem" (Lk 2:38).

Do we share the same confidence in waiting as the Psalmist and other saints of old? The LORD will provide help in time of need as we face whatever brokenness of life – if not to relieve us of the burden, then to give us strength to bear the burden (1 Cor 10:13). Ultimately, the LORD will deliver us from this broken world and all its sin and misery when Christ returns a second time, and then in glory. Final redemption is coming! The new earth is coming!

Romans 8 gives us a tremendous picture of expectant waiting. It's a picture of hope! In Romans 8:19 we read, "For the creation *waits* with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God." That's the time when Christ will return and believers will be revealed publicly to be the heirs of God. All creation is waiting for that day! Romans 8:23,24 goes on to say, "And not only the creation, but we ourselves...groan inwardly as we *wait* eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved." That's the day when Christ will return and dead believers will be raised incorruptible and they will share in the full fruit of adoption. All Christians are waiting for that day! Waiting for the final redemption with hope – that's what Psalm 130 is ultimately about!

Even the saints in heaven are waiting for the full and final redemption on the day of Christ's return. Revelation 6:9-11 gives us a picture of the saints under the altar in heaven, and they cry out: "How long" (Rev 6:10)?

Ever since the Fall into sin, this world has been plagued by sin and brokenness. If it isn't one crisis, it's another. It won't end until the day Christ returns in glory. Are you longingly waiting for Christ's return in glory, when he will make all things new? Say it with Psalm 130: "...my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning..." (Ps 130:6). Come, Lord Jesus!