

(Psalm 130:1-2) - This psalm, along with fourteen other psalms (*Psalm 120–134*) is called a “*Song of Degrees*,” meaning “song of steps.” The probable origin of this name was the circumstance that these psalms came to be sung by the people on going up to Jerusalem to attend the three great festivals (*Deut. 16:16*). It may also refer to how these psalms build from a low point to a glorious highlight of Gospel truth. This one starts out expressing a sinner’s low estate in sin and depravity - “*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD.*”

When the Lord God brings us to see our utter sinfulness, spiritual deadness, and depravity, He also brings us to see that there is absolutely no hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life within ourselves or by our best efforts to obey God. He brings His people to see that their only hope is to look to Him alone and cast themselves upon His mercy - “*God be merciful to me a sinner*” (*Luke 18:13*). This is what it means to be slain by the law or slain by the Spirit. This is how we begin to know that the Holy Spirit is working true conviction in our hearts in our new birth.

(Psalm 130:3) - The Spirit brings us to realize that no matter how much we try to be sincere, dedicated servants of the law of God, if the Lord would keep an account or a record of our sins, we would be condemned. If God were to judge any of us, the worst of us and the best of us, based on our best efforts to keep the law, we would be eternally condemned and perish under the curse and guilt of the law. Here is a realization and confession that by nature and practice we ARE sinners, workers of iniquity, and we cannot rise above this state, neither of our own wills nor by our best works. Our only hope of attaining a right standing with God Who hates all workers of iniquity (*Psalm 5:5*) and Who must punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed (charged) is to turn to God. This realization brings forth the question of all questions as stated by Job and his friend, Bildad. Job asked -

Job 9 - (2) I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? (3) If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand.

Job was saying that if he himself tried to defend himself before God, for every point Job would try to offer in his own defense, God could and would respond with a thousand charges that would prove Job to be guilty and deserving of condemnation. Bildad asked -

Job 25 - (4) How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? (5) Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight.

The problem with all of us in our state of sin, spiritual death, and depravity is that we cannot answer this question of how we can have a right standing with God and how the problem of sin and death can be cured. But in our new birth (regeneration and conversion), the Holy Spirit does not leave us in a state of hopelessness and misery. He shows us the promise and reality of forgiveness based on a just ground - the merits of Christ’s work of redemption as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

(Psalm 130:4) - The rest of this psalm sets forth the God of all grace and mercy Who is sure to forgive all of His chosen people in a way that honors and magnifies Himself as both a just God and a merciful Savior. This verse following verse 3 shows us that the forgiveness of sins must be connected with the non-imputation of sins to the persons of God’s elect and in a way

that justifies and honors God (*Psalms 32:1-2; Rom. 8:33-34*). There can be no forgiveness of sinners where sin is imputed to them. This is why the biblical truth of imputation is so important and such a blessing for sinners saved by grace - "*Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*" (*Psalms 32:2*). In the Bible, the non-imputation of sins to the persons of God's elect means that God has imputed their sins to Christ (*2 Cor. 5:21a*). And this means Christ's righteousness has been imputed to God's elect (*Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21b*). Where Christ's righteousness is imputed to sinners, they will be born again by the Spirit and given the gifts of spiritual life, faith, repentance, and perseverance. They will be brought by God to be honest concerning themselves in their sins as stated in *verse 3*.

When God the Holy Spirit reveals God's way of forgiving us of our sins, it brings forth such a reverence and respect for the true nature of God that it inspires God-given faith, repentance of dead works and idolatry, true worship and godly obedience. When the Holy Spirit applies this truth to our consciences, it produces the love and respect for God as our heavenly Father and Redeemer (*Rom. 5:5; 7:4-6; 1 John 4:9-19*). The sense of true forgiveness by God's grace in Christ is the greatest encouragement and motivation for obedience and godliness (*Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27; Php. 2:12-13; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 13:21*). This is the assurance of forgiveness based on the just ground of the blood of Jesus Christ Who has put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (*Acts 5:30-31; 13:38; Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 1:1-3; 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:4-5*). Forgiveness claimed on any other ground does not honor the true and living God and does not inspire true reverence for His name (His glory).

(*Psalms 130:5-6*) - In the Bible, waiting on the Lord and hoping in His Word is a God-given act of faith (*Psalms 27:4*). All of the Old Testament believers were brought by God to wait on the Lord as they looked forward to the fulfillment of God's promise to send Christ, the Messiah, into the world to do His great work of redemption (*ex. Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 9:24*). Their hope was in the promise of God as all those promises were sure to be fulfilled in and by the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. To "*watch for the morning*" means they looked for a new day, the day of fulfillment where all their hopes would be finally realized in Christ (*John 8:56-58; Heb. 6:13-20*).

(*Psalms 130:7-8*) - The name "*Israel*" was the name the LORD gave to Jacob to identify him as one of the spiritual children of the God of all grace (*Gen. 32:22-32*). The name means "those who prevail with God," and the only way that sinners can prevail (succeed) with God is by God's grace in bringing them to Christ for all hope and assurance of salvation. This name was given to the physical descendants of Jacob, the physical nation of Israel, who were commanded by the LORD and encouraged by the prophets to "*hope in the Lord*" and not put their trust in themselves or other nations (*Exod. 14:11-14; Prov. 3:5-6*). Throughout their history under the Law of Moses, they failed to trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and stubbornly turned to their own ways. They sought righteousness by works of the law and not by God's grace in and by the promised Messiah (*Rom. 9:31-10:3*). But true, spiritual Israel, the elect of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and made up both of elect Jews and elect Gentiles, are brought by God to hope in the Lord God of all grace Who saves sinners in mercy based on the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Php. 3:3; Gal. 6:14-16; cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29*). God has provided for spiritual Israel (His people) "*plenteous redemption*" in the Lord Jesus Christ Who, by His obedience unto death, has redeemed His people, the true Israel, "*from all his iniquities.*" Here, we see the love of God to His elect who are just as sinful as all workers of iniquity whom God hates (*Psalms 5:5*), but who are not charged with iniquity because of redemption by the blood of Christ.