

November 13, 2008

Psalm 130 (NASB)

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive

To the voice of my supplications.

If You, Lord, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with You,

That You may be feared.

I wait for the Lord, my soul* does wait,

And in His word do I hope.

My soul* waits for the Lord

More than the watchmen for the morning;

Indeed, more than the watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord;

For with the Lord there is lovingkindness,**

And with Him is abundant redemption.

And He will redeem Israel

From all his iniquities.

**The Hebrew word here translated "soul" did not carry the same dichotomous thought as the Greek idea of a severe division of body and soul. The Hebrew term more accurately refers to the entirety of our being; it refers to our whole personhood.*

***The Hebrew word here translated "lovingkindness" includes God's enduring faithfulness and loyalty to His people.*

For those of us who, at one time or another, have spent time in the dark recesses of existence, this psalm speaks volumes. We know the pleading that accompanies the agony of doubt, pain, discouragement, and shame. In awe, we fall before a God powerful enough to consume us and yet gentle enough to nurse us back to health. It is that undeserved forgiveness that prompts us to fear God. I'm afraid, however, that His forgiveness too often finds us moving to the opposite extreme. We know the danger of becoming callous to sin, but do we know the danger of becoming callous to forgiveness? Have we considered what becomes of us when the forgiveness of God becomes too common and cheap? This psalmist wasn't making this mistake.

This penitential psalmist was living and breathing watchfulness for God. He believed that the dawn would come as a potent answer to every dark night, and he gave himself over to the belief that God would forgive again. This psalm never argues for the righteousness of the psalmist. It never appeals to God based on the worthiness of the penitent. Instead, the psalmist appeals both to the Lord and to the community based on the faithfully-redemptive nature of God.

When we are lost in the dark, we have no better hope for light and salvation than that which is found in God and in His word. May we have the humility to admit such truth, and may we know God well enough to know that He does hear us. He is here with us at all times and in every place. Even in the deepest depths of confusion and despair, God, too, is there.

Because of Him,
Patrick Barber