

When In the Depths

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 September 2013

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Jonah had seen better days. You know where he was, don't you? But Jonah chapter 2 starts out.

! From inside the fish, Jonah prayed to the Lord his God. And he said, In my distress, I called to the Lord, and he answered me.

From the depths of the grave, I called for help, and you listened to my cry. You hurled me into the deep. The current swirled about me, but you brought my life up from the pit.

So out of the depths, Jonah cried, and God heard and answered. Jonah chapter 2 is a perfect commentary on Psalm 130. And that's our text for this afternoon.

If you could please turn there. Psalm 130. You remember in these afternoons, we are looking at the Songs of Ascent, and we've come to Psalm 130.

[1:10] And if you listen, you can hear echoes of Jonah 2. Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord. O Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

But with you, there is forgiveness. Therefore, you are feared. I wait for the Lord. My soul waits. And in his word, I put my hope.

My soul waits for the Lord. More than watchmen wait for the morning. More than watchmen wait for the morning. O Israel, put your hope in the Lord.

For with the Lord is unfailing love. And with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

[2:11] Well, did you hear some echoes of Jonah 2 in there? Psalm 130 breaks easily into four parts.

And we're going to look at each part in turn. And it's four things to do when you are in the depths. Four things to do when you are in the depths because of your sin.

And I'm going to take it for granted that, brothers and sisters, you know what it's like to be there. You've been there.

You know what it feels like. And if you haven't ever felt that, you've never felt that at all, that tells me you're not been saved.

Because salvation begins with finding your place in the depths. And it's only when God takes the battering ram of the truth and by the power of the Spirit breaks into your hard heart and opens your eyes that you see exactly where you are.

[3:19] God's wrath is upon you. You are created to glorify and enjoy him forever. And you have neither glorified him nor enjoyed him.

And justice cries out for your life. Justice cries out for your life because you are unrighteous. And so I pray that you would see that truly today.

If you've never had your eyes open, if you've never experienced what it's like to be in the depths because of your sin, I pray that God would take that battering ram and break open your heart.

Well, what do you do when you find yourself in the depths? Four things. Four simple things. The first is cry. Cry. Cry. Verse 1. Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord.

So what are these depths? We need to talk about that first. Well, Jonah, the chapter I've referenced a couple times now, it gives us a perfect illustration. Those, these depths are the felt wrath of God.

[4:26] The felt displeasure of God. So Jonah felt God's displeasure when he was in the water and the waves and the currents were taking him. Psalm 88 talks about these depths.

You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. Your wrath lies heavily upon me. You have overwhelmed me with all your waves.

I've suffered your terrors and am in despair. All day long, they surround me like a flood. They have completely engulfed me.

So what are these depths? It's the terror. It's the shame. It's the horror. It's the guilt. It's the trouble. The darkness. Of God's wrath. So can Christians feel that? Well, yes, we can.

[5 : 27] God's judge within that conscience that he's given us can judge us, can thunder upon us and say guilty, vile, wicked.

So can Christians feel what it's like to be in the depths? Yes, we are saved, but can we come back to this place? Yes. Well, how do we get there? Why?

Well, sin. Sin. So maybe you took something. You saw something and you took it. David saw Bathsheba and took her.

And he enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season. And then was he free? No. Day and night, your hand was heavy upon me.

I wasted away, groaning all day long. You wanted something, but you didn't get it. And so you fought and you killed and you coveted, you quarreled and you argued.

[6 : 30] And now behind you is the bleeding hearts of your children because you had to have your way. Or there is the bleeding heart of your wife because you had to have what you wanted.

Now, Christian, you've been there. One way or another, you've been there. Maybe you are there now. And you did it. You are the man.

You are the woman. And now God has stirred up the conscience within you and he's thrown you into the depths and you are in agony and the misery and the shame and your heart is aching because of your sin.

So what do you do? Verse 1, Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord. Out of the depths. Don't wait until you're at the surface again to cry.

Don't wait until you feel better about it to cry. Don't even wait until you have a sense of God's favor again to cry. Out of the depths, I cry.

[7 : 34] So cry when you have nothing good to say for yourself. That's what the psalm is teaching us. Cry when you have nothing to offer. Cry when you are in the middle of it. In the middle of the guilt. In the middle of the shame.

In the middle of the darkness and the pain and the misery. And it's when you are in that state when you realize I have nothing to say and my heart is in misery here.

That's when you cry out in humility. All waiting is pride. All waiting to cry is pride. All waiting is self-righteousness.

It's like I have to do something. I have to prepare something. I have to get ready. I need to change something before God will receive me. That kind of waiting is pride and is self-righteousness. We have to say guilty, vile, helpless, we spotless Lamb of God.

Thee. So when you have nothing to say for yourself except help. Have mercy. That's when God has ears to hear. And praise God He has ears that are trained to hear sinners cry when they're in the depths.

[8 : 37] God has a heart trained to hear sinners in the black night of sin. So cry.

Cry like that blind man who sat beside the road begging on the way to Jericho. Jesus was walking by and the blind man heard the commotion and he asked who it was and someone said it's Jesus. And that man cried out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And the people said, shut up. Be quiet. Don't bother him. You have no right to talk to him.

And was he discouraged? No, he cried all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. And then what did Jesus do? He stopped. The whole procession stopped.

And he went over to that man and he said, what can I do for you? What do you want me to do? So there's more grace in our Lord Jesus than we can ever fathom.

[9 : 39] So cry in the midst of the depths of your sin. Now some Christians and even some reformed Christians are so afraid of cheap grace that they don't hope in real grace or they have a hard time hoping in real grace.

They're so afraid of abusing grace that they don't believe that God can have instant grace for them and their sin. So that's one of the worst things about easy believism and this doctrine of God is only love because what it ends up doing is it ends up stealing bread from God's children and it makes them feel like they can't take advantage of the real thing.

It's made instant just out of sin, grace, suspect. But here it is in God's word, out of God's mouth, out of the depths, I cry.

I cry for mercy. So what do you do when you're in the depths? One, cry. Two, argue. Argue. Verses three and four, the psalmist argues with God.

And friends, this is the audacity of faith. The audacity of faith. Biblical faith dares to argue with God. Verse three, if you, Lord, kept a record of sins.

[11:00] Oh, Lord, who could stand? What does that mean? Keep a record of sin. Well, the phrase kept a record is one word in Hebrew and it's the normal word for keep.

But it carries the idea of cherishing in your heart, of remembering and meditating upon. So, Joseph, do you remember he had those fantastic dreams about his brothers bowing down before him and his mom and his dad even bowing down before him?

And he had these dreams and he told his brothers and his brothers hated him for him. They made fun of him for him. But Jacob, it says, Jacob, his father, kept it in his heart.

He kept these things in his heart. He pondered those dreams. He remembered the dreams. He thought often about them. They weren't just like the dreams of your children they tell you and you don't think about it anymore.

He thought about these things. That's the word here. So, Lord, if you kept a record, if you hid away my sins in your heart and you remembered them all, you never let go of them, then I could never stand before you.

[12:09] I could never stand. If there was no forgetting, if there was no forgiveness, I would be doomed because I am guilty and I know it. Now, how is that for a strange argument?

Lord, have mercy on me because I'm guilty. I'm guilty, so have mercy on me. But his argument has the second line. Yes, I am guilty, but God with you is forgiveness.

forgiveness. It's something we need to remind ourselves constantly of, I believe, as Christians, or at least a lot of Christians need to remind themselves of that there is no other God except a God who forgives sinners when they cry for mercy.

So, to believe in a holy, just, righteous God who is also hard-hearted and slow to forgive and without mercy is idolatry.

It is to worship a God that does not exist. For with you is forgiveness. It's more than idolatry, it's blasphemy. It's a strong word.

[13:21] John Owen said, It is the highest blasphemy and reproach of God imaginable to conceive there is no forgiveness with him for us. So many Christians go from one extreme to another.

So they leave the arms of easy believism and cheap grace and a God whose only love who has no wrath and then they discover the holiness and the righteousness and the majesty and the awe of God and then they slip into another side.

And so they have a God who is great and holy and majestic and righteousness but quick to anger and slow to forgive who has just but a tiny bit of love and affection for his people just when they're staying in the straight and narrow.

That's not just idolatry. That's not just worshiping a God that does not exist. It's blasphemy. It's a reproach on God. And it's no wonder that they don't evangelize because they have nothing good to say about their God.

It's not the fear of man that's the problem. It's that they don't have any good news to tell anyone. But listen to what faith says. With you there is forgiveness.

[14:37] God, I feel nothing but guilt, shame, and dread, and I feel your anger and I feel your displeasure, but with you is forgiveness. And there's no boundaries put on this forgiveness.

It doesn't matter how long you've been in sin. You cry out for mercy. You cry out and lay a hold of Jesus Christ and there's forgiveness. And it doesn't matter how big your sin is. David murdered a man and God forgave him.

It doesn't matter how repeated it is. And that's often our problem. Here I am. I did it again. I don't want to do this. Even Paul said, I don't understand the things that I do.

Do you know what that's like? Here I am again. I want to not do this sin, but here I am. I am doing it. But those who cry out in genuine faith, even for repeated sins, there is forgiveness.

The psalmist is saying, God, have mercy on me because that is the kind of God you are. You are a God who forgives. But then his argument ends with, therefore, you are feared.

[15 : 45] God, forgive me that I might fear you. Now, this is something that a legalist and an antinomian, a person who thinks that you can be righteous with God by your works and a person who doesn't think you need to obey God's law at all, this is something that they, as polar opposites as they can be usually, they can never understand and never experience in one way or another, fear that comes from forgiveness.

That makes no sense until you have experienced it. No sense until you've felt it in your own heart. But here it is. Forgiveness does what strict justice cannot do.

Grace wins a place in our hearts for this awesome God. And it's not a low place, it's a high and a holy and a reverent place of awe where the greatness of God and love for God mingle.

Where both, I sense how great and glorious and just and righteous and holy he is and yet I love him. And yet, it's where warm affection and the majesty of God live together where holiness and joy sing along.

Now, law and justice, they bring us to a place of terror when God says, you have sinned. This is the law, you've broken it and this is what you deserve.

[17 : 25] This is who I am and you've sinned against me. And it brings us to a place of terror. We say, I've sinned, I'm ruined. And yes, you're afraid of God. If you're without grace, yes, you can be brought to a state of fear, but there's no reverence.

There's no real esteem. Yes, we see him as high and holy and terrible, but I don't feel any love for him. I don't feel like that's a good thing for me.

I don't hold him high in my heart. He's just this frightening reality that I have to somehow soothe and manage or hide from, but I don't esteem him. But what does the heart say that has received mercy? This is, I am a sinner. God, your law is righteous and good. I've sinned against it and yet you've given me mercy. What does that, what does that kind of heart say? It says, I don't want to displease him.

He's been so good to me. He is so wonderful. He is so pure and holy and kind and sacred. I don't want to sin against him. He's too good. He's too glorious to sin against.

[18 : 29] That's the gospel power of holiness. We love God because he first loved us and because we love him, we appreciate him and we esteem him and we fear him and we're in awe and we obey him.

So that's the psalmist argument. Lord, I'm guilty. I have nothing to say for myself, but you're a God who forgives. That's how you've revealed yourself to me.

And if you forgive me, then I will love you more. I will fear you more. If you forgive me, I will walk in reverence before you and you'll become more beautiful and more glorious and majestic than I've known you yet.

So forgive me. Forgive me for your own sake. That's the audacity of faith. That's the biblical argument for sinners when they're in the depths, when they've found themselves in sin.

So take it, brothers and sisters. Use it. Be bold with it. God has given it to us so that we could take it and use it. Richard Sibbes, the Puritan, said, we hinder God's glory if we do not believe his mercy in Christ to us.

[19 : 44] We hinder God's glory when we don't believe in his mercy in Christ for us. Standing off, waiting, hiding, trying to just make yourself a little better, until you feel a little better, until maybe a little more time has passed, and then I'll go to him.

Maybe wait until I'm in a better frame of mind. All that is pride, self-righteousness, it's focusing on me, and yet here this is, that's, and what that does is that steals glory from God.

We hinder God's glory if we don't believe his mercy. So do you want to give glory to God out of your sin? Confess it, and come to Christ, and you'll exalt God, you'll exalt his grace.

So with you there is forgiveness, so be bold, and believe. So cry, argue, and now we have to talk about the last two points quickly, and our time is pretty much gone.

Three, wait. Verse 5, I wait for the Lord. My soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. You've cried. You've argued.

[20 : 56] Now wait. Wait. This is not a passive waiting. Not a passive waiting. This is a watchful waiting. So you're not just sitting there, you're watching.

And what are you doing while you wait, while you watch? What are you watching for? You're looking for mercy to come to you. You're going to keep waiting. You're going to keep believing. You're going to keep crying. You're going to keep arguing until mercy comes to you.

And so like a watchman keeps watch for the dawn, you keep looking for God's mercy. And you keep believing. You keep believing his word. In your word I put my hope.

He said it. You said it. And because you said it. I'm going to believe it. I'm going to hold on to it. I'm going to hold you to it. He said with him is forgiveness. You said with you is forgiveness.

And I'm going to wait until I see that in my life. This is confident waiting. Do watchmen wait for the dawn wondering if it's going to come?

[22:00] No. Dawn will break. The sun will shine. You wait for it to happen. You don't wonder if it's going to happen.

The sun will stop shining. Dawns will stop coming before God breaks his promise to repentant sinners. So what do you do?

You wait. You wait expectantly. You wait hopefully. You wait actively until he comes and he washes you and forgives you. Now fourth.

You receive and you tell others. You receive and tell others. Cry. Argue. Wait. Now receive and then tell others. Now something happens between verses 6 and verses 7.

Verse 6 and verse 7 that's not on the page. He doesn't record exactly how it happened. But what is what is obviously there is the psalmist received mercy.

[23:02] He received mercy. He's been waiting. He's been waiting in verse 6 but now in verse 7 he simply says, O Israel, put your hope in the Lord for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. Now how could he say those things unless he had experienced them? He just he just sinned.

He'd fallen into in the depths. He cried for mercy. He waited and God answered and now he says, looking back on that experience, O Israel, put your hope in the Lord for with him is unfailing love and full redemption.

Now, God poured out his unfailing love on this needy sinner. He forgave that man his sins. He received. The one who asks receives and this is the way with our God and this is your God.

Unfailing love full redemption. He received and now he tells others, O Israel, put your hope in the Lord. And I say the same thing to you, O church of God.

[24:14] You're the new Israel of God. Put your hope in the Lord. Put your hope in the Lord. Are you in the depths? Are you in the depths? Put your hope in the Lord.

With the Lord is unfailing love. Unfailing love. Faithful. Promised. Blood bought. Blood sealed. Love. God will love.

God can love. God will forgive and save his people completely. Full redemption. He will save them from all their sins. How can he do that?

Because Jesus Christ has died. He's died for sinners. And so now, it's not only grace that cries, come to me.

It's not only grace that cries out for you. It's justice. It's justice. Grace and justice joined a point to mercy store. God will forgive you. So all of God, all that he is, is now for you.

[25:14] If you're in Christ, it's even all for you now that you're in the depths. And so he says, cry out for help. Cry out for mercy. And you will receive it. And you'll receive it for Christ's sake.

And I say, that's the glory of Jesus. Without him, we have nothing. All we have is a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume God's enemies.

Saw that this morning. Without Jesus, all we have is that to look forward to. But now we have God for us. Christ is our hope.

He's all we have. He's all we have. He's all we need. He's all we need. So praise the Lord. With him is forgiveness for Jesus' sake.

Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you that you know how we are made. And thank you that you know that there would be times when we fell into the depths because of our sin.

[26:20] And we felt your wrath and your anger and your displeasure for our wickedness swirling about us. Thank you that you gave us this psalm.

Thank you that even more than that, thank you that there is grace for us when we sin against you. That you extend your hands.

And because of Jesus, there's mercy for us. I pray for the person here that has never had their eyes opened.

And I pray that you would open their eyes and then I pray that you would show them their desperate need. Show them your anger. Show them your great displeasure with them. And make it lead them to Jesus Christ then. Exalt your holiness. Exalt your justice. And exalt your grace.

[27 : 25] That you would have glory from them in their lives. And I pray for my brother and sister here who maybe they're looking over a week, a bad week, full of sin and full of distance between you and them and they find themselves in the depths.

I pray that you would encourage their heart to seek your mercy. Thank you that this, there's this look of you and a look, you open up your word and show us your heart and encourage us then to cry out.

I pray that we would do so. Thank you all for all these things. they're all in Jesus Christ and we give him the glory, the honor, and the praise.

Thank you Lord Jesus for being our mighty Savior. And it's in your name I pray. Amen. Amen.