

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
June 25, 2017

Salvation Out of the Depths

Psalm 130

130:1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

130:2 O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

130:3 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

130:4 But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

130:6 my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

130:7 O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

130:8 And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Psalms from 120 to 134 are titled with “Song of Ascents.” These were sung by pilgrims who went to the temple of Jerusalem. Pilgrims who are visiting eighty-eight spiritual spots in Shikoku in Japan sing their chant at each spot. Like that the people of Israel also sang this song during their trip to Jerusalem. They were healed the fatigue of the trip and their heart of worshipping God was nurtured by the song.

People say, “Life is a travel.” And, the way is not easy. There are “the valley of the shadow of death,” “the pit of destruction,” and “the miry bog,” and so on. The believers’ goal is Jerusalem in heaven, but there are many obstructions, pitfalls, and dark swamplands on the way to heaven.

We found the word, “depths” in the psalm. It means “very bottom.” The way toward the highest heaven often starts from the depths, or very bottom. In the journey of our life or in the travel of faith, we may fall into the same pits which we have once fallen and saved from them. We may experience such struggles more when we tried to live our life more seriously and to believe more faithfully in God. Today, let’s learn the secrets how to be saved from such struggles.

1. Calling On God (verses 1 and 2)

The first secret is calling on God for help.

In the Bible there are many individuals who were actually thrown into the depths. Joseph in Genesis was one of such persons. Joseph was thrown in a pit by his brothers from their jealousy. His brothers planned to kill him, but his life was saved by being sold to Egypt as a slave. He was bought by an officer of Pharaoh. Since Joseph showed his talents, the master made him the manager over his whole household. Joseph was not only saved from a deep pit, but also got the high position of the house. However, he was falsely accused and put into a prison. But he was trusted by the warder, and managed everything of the prison even though he himself was a prisoner. And, finally he was released from the prison and was given the authority to manage whole land of Egypt. He was thrown into the depths twice; first into a pit of the field, and next into the prison, but he was saved from the depths and reached to the highest position.

Prophet Jeremiah was cast down into the cistern of mud by ropes. Daniel was also cast into the den of lions. Both of them were suffered and their life was jeopardized because they were faithful to God. But,

God saved them from the sufferings and kept their life from many dangers.

These people were saved and protected by calling on God. God says, “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” (Psalm 50:15) We have a proverb, saying, “Once on shore, we pray no more.” It’s no good to forget prayer after rescued, but it’s good to pray to God when we are troubled. God Himself orders us to pray for our needs, we can pray anything boldly.

Verse 1 says, “O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!” We tend to complain sufferings, we get depressed by pains, and we are frustrated by unexpected happenings. But don’t stay there. Call on God. We can call 911 in case of emergency. Like that we can call God in any cases. God will neither slumber nor sleep, and listen to our prayer. He will answer us for sure.

As for David, life was aimed at by King Saul. He had to run away from Saul, wandered in the wasteland, and hid himself into caves in many times. When David was in the depths, he called on God for help. In Psalm 40:1-2, David said, “I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.” God answers the believers who believe and trust in Him, ask His salvation from their sufferings. God can lift those who call on Him for help from any kind of depths.

2. Repenting Sins (verses 3 and 4)

The second secret to be saved out of depths is repenting our sins.

In Psalm 130:3-4, it says, “If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.” This is a phrase of repentance. “Song of Ascents” was made when people of Jude came back from Babylonia and re-established the crushed temple to recover their worship. Not only the pilgrims rejoiced the recovery of the temple and gave thanks for coming back to lands of ancestors, but also recognized their sins. Because of the sins the temple was destroyed and they became captives. Therefore, the people of Jude deeply repented their sins and prayed for forgiveness to God.

Some people might maintain that there’s no need to remember the past; because the temple was restored and they were going to worship their God, and they should enjoy and be happy for worship! No need to think about repenting their sins! Well, is that so? If people truthfully come to God, they would know that no one could be close to God without repentance. In Psalm 66:18, it says, “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” While we still have sins inside, neither God can be with us nor can we be related with God. Repent, (believe) and be forgiven, then finally we could come close to Him. Thus, the churches in ancient generation sang the prayer, “Kyrie, elision (means; “Lord, have mercy”). Even now, churches in Europe have prayers for opening, interceding, offering and repenting while their worship. We don’t follow the same order of worship service, yet we’d like to repent before worship; because we could be saved out of the depths of sins through giving-thanks for the grace of forgiveness, being released from the identity of sins, and receiving the power to overcome our sins in our daily life.

The hymn number 471 sings, "In loving-kindness Jesus came, My soul in mercy to reclaim, And from the depths of sin and shame through grace He lifted me. From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand He lifted me; From shades of night to plains of light, Oh, praise His Name, He lifted me!" Likewise this hymn, we know God's Love comes toward the sinners. Jesus came for us, the sinners. People know God for real when they recognize their sins. When we repent our sins, we could have relationship with God and we can truthfully praise God, singing, "Oh, He lifted me!"

3. Waiting for God (verses 5 and 6)

The third secret to be saved from the depths is waiting for God in trust.

God responds to those who pray. But the timing of response is not necessarily what we predict. Most of the time, God is quicker than we think and He does more than we hope. But there is a time where we have to wait for a long time or it seems like things are not working as we expect. But even in these situations, we have to wait, trusting in God. This is the tip we will be saved from the depths.

Do you remember the accident in the San Jose Mine in Chile in August, 2010? Thirty three miners were trapped in a small space 700 meter underneath the ground for sixty-nine days. They only had a small amount of foods and water, but they encouraged each other and waited for the rescue team and every one of them were finally rescued. Under the excellent leader, they had a routine life and prepared for the rescue. In addition, believers prayed God every day and from God they had confidence that they would be saved for sure.

Psalm 130:5-6 says “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.” The watchmen indicate those who protect the temple. They make fire and watch for the palace during the night without any sleep. It is until the night breaks with the sunshine that they can relax. The word translated for “the depths” used to be a plural form of ‘depth’. You may translate it as “the depth of the depths”. It refers to the bottom of earth or bottom of ocean where sunlight cannot reach. As there is a word “no way out”, in our long life; there comes an attack when there is no light or when we cannot see our future. In that situation, everyone wishes that things would be better and the light would come. You may understand the feeling of “more than watchmen for the morning.”

If you don't have faith, you can easily be desperate when you fall into deep depths and cannot see the light. But if you have faith, even they have a problem that is “being in the dark and cannot see anything further”, you can wait for , trust God and believing that a morning will come. As Psalm 130:5 says “I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope”, even if there is no sunlight, believers have a fire to light the dark, that is the God's Word. Those who wait trusting in God will assure them through the Word of God that there is no evening without a morning.

The life of believers will never end in dark, instead, it will be led to the light. Revelation 22:5 describes “Jerusalem in Heaven” and say “And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” In the ancient days, people thought that a day ended with a

sunset. In modern world, a day starts and ends at midnight. In both cases, a day begins in dark and ends in dark. Indeed, we have a reality like that. But when God renews the world, there will be no night. The day won't end. Those who are saved will walk in eternal light. Those who believe will enter the light. Moreover, they are allowed to receive the light in a present world. Those who walk toward Jerusalem in Heaven, they can walk and experience the blessing of Heavenly Jerusalem even in this world.

Even if you are in the depths, there is no place where God's hand cannot reach. Let's call on Lord. Let's come near to God with repentance, and let's wait for God by His Word.

(Prayer)

Dear Heavenly Father, how many times did we fall into the deep depths! But every time we cry for salvation, and You always rescued us from the darkness. I pray that those who are suffering in their life will find salvation of Jesus Christ. Please use us as an example of your mercy. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.