

Songs of Ascents: 129, 130

Psalms that lift the soul

Each psalm in Psalms 120-134 has the title “a song of ascents.”

Ascents may refer to pilgrimages up to Jerusalem for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

Last week we covered Psalms 127 and 128.

Psalm 127 reminded that without the LORD everything is in vain.

Psalm 128 spoke of the blessings for those who fear the LORD and spoke peace upon Israel.

Both Psalm 127 and Psalm 128 emphasized that children and family are the LORD’s blessings.

Let’s hear Psalm 128 again before we read Psalm 129. The two psalms are contrasts.

Psalm 129

A song of ascents.

1 They have greatly oppressed me from my youth—let Israel say—

2 they have greatly oppressed me from my youth, but they have not gained the victory over me.

3 Plowmen have plowed my back and made their furrows long.

4 But the LORD is righteous; he has cut me free from the cords of the wicked.”

5 May all who hate Zion be turned back in shame.

6 May they be like grass on the roof, which withers before it can grow;

7 with it the reaper cannot fill his hands, nor the one who gathers fill his arms.

8 May those who pass by not say,

“The blessing of the LORD be upon you; we bless you in the name of the LORD.”

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

Note the similar beginning to Psalm 124: *let Israel say*. Both psalms have a similar theme.

Concentrate on verses 1-4. What two images does the psalm use to describe the oppressions?

What might the oppressions literally be?

According to verses 1-4, what happened when the oppressions came on?

Describe who are *all who hate Zion*.

What does the psalmist pray for them?

How could you pray about people that the LORD's blessing not be on them?

Psalm 130

A song of ascents.

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;

2 O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

3 If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.

*6 My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

7 O Israel, put your hope in the LORD,

for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

8 He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

Does this psalm seem to you like more of a song of ascents or a song of descents?

Note how the psalm goes back and forth between *LORD* and *Lord*. Let's discuss the difference.

What *depths* do you think the psalmist is coming from?

What is the psalm writer looking for?

Comment on what it would be like if the LORD did keep a record of sins.

Therefore you are feared. What does that mean?

What is the psalm writer waiting for?

Concentrate on verses 7-8.

Who is the psalm writer talking to in these verses?

What does the writer have to say?

Where do you find Jesus Christ in this psalm?

Do you have hope? If not, why not? If so, what is it?

Martin Luther wrote a hymn based on this psalm (hymn 305 CW). It was written in 1523.

From depths of woe I cry to you; Lord, hear me, I implore you.

Bend down your gracious ear to me; my prayer let come before you.

If you kept record of my sin and held against me what I've been, how could I stand before you?

Your love and grace alone avail to blot out my transgression.

The best and holiest deeds must fail to break sin's dread oppression.

Before you none can boasting stand, but all must fear your strict demand and live alone by mercy.

Therefore my hope is in the Lord and not in my own merit;

it rests upon his faithful Word to them of contrite spirit.

That he is merciful and just—this is my comfort and my trust. His help I wait with patience.

My soul is waiting for the Lord as one who longs for morning;

no watcher waits with greater hope than I for his returning.

I hope as Israel in the Lord; he sends redemption through his Word; we praise him for his mercy.